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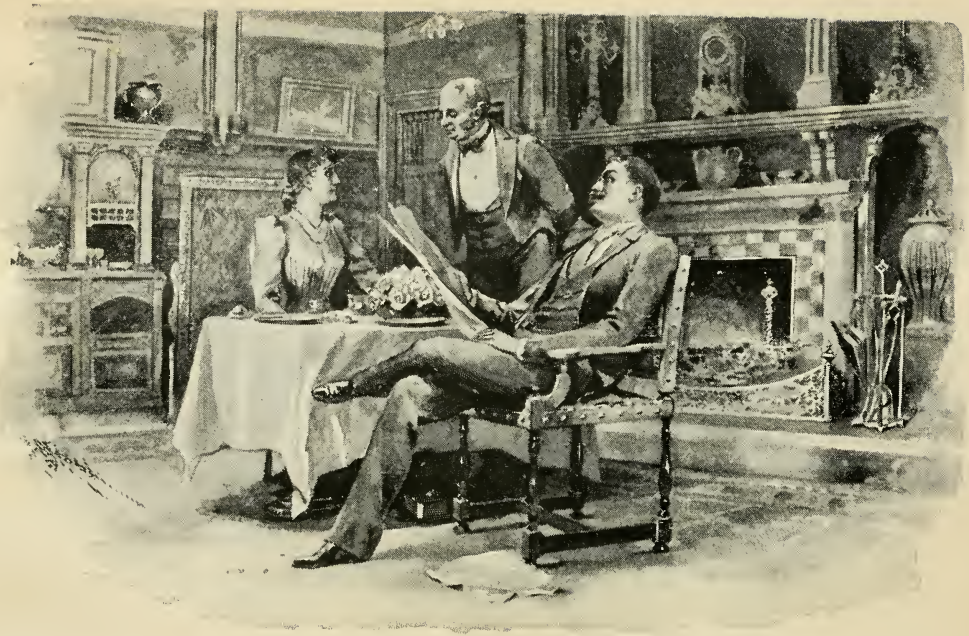

A QUESTION SETTLED. *Page* 8.

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MRS. HAROLD STAGG

By Robert Grant

Author of "Unleavened Bread," Etc.

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MRS. HAROLD STAGG.

CHAPTER I.

A QUESTION SETTLED.

"THERE is only one thing to be done," said Mrs. Harold Stagg, as the outcome of some minutes of reverie, during which she had sat tapping one of her feet nervously on the carpet and staring into space with a harrassed expression in her dark blue eyes; "we must take them in."

"It is exceedingly kind of you to suggest it, Emma," replied her husband. The same idea

had occurred to him, but he had refrained from putting it into words, for he realized that the burden of establishing three orphaned children in the house would fall almost entirely on his wife. The additional expense would be a very small consideration; the important factors in the case were the care, worry and responsibility necessarily involved. He would doubtless have deemed it his duty to propose the plan himself after a time, had his wife not done so, but this spontaneous offer gratified him, and, moreover, confirmed him in the belief that Emma was one of the kindest and most unselfish women in the world.

"It is your duty, Harold," she said, with a somewhat tragic air. "And what is your duty is mine. There is no other way of looking at it. We must send for them at once."

"So it seems to me," he said, decidedly. "I'll start myself to-night. I shall scarcely be in time for the funeral, but there'll be a lot of things to be attended to afterward, and the children may

have no one whom they can call upon. Then I can bring them East myself."

"It will be excessively inconvenient, of course," continued Mrs. Stagg, still staring into distance. "The two boys we can send to boarding-school. I will write to Mr. Sampson to-morrow, to see if he has any vacancies for next term. I shall have to put them all in the blue suite. The bare idea, though, of having three pairs of muddy boots tramping all over the house on my new carpets and polished floors, and destroying all the freshness of the chintzes and the furniture in my beloved blue suite, makes me feel positively ill. There's no help for it, though, that I can see, except to insist on their going up the back-stairs." She spoke now rapidly and incisively. Having definitely settled that the children were to be taken in, she was bent upon formulating as soon as possible, the necessary arrangements. Her agile housekeeper's mind foresaw a thousand complications which her energy yearned to grapple with and solve.

"Why not put Eleanor into the spare room and the two boys into the play-room, if you think they would injure the blue suite? You could easily make them comfortable there."

"And what would my own children do for a play-room, I should like to know? No, no, I am not going to have little Harold and Posie's comfort interfered with, now that everything is working smoothly in my nursery. In the blue suite, the three Baldwins will be by themselves in connecting rooms; and if they catch anything, there will be some chance of getting them out of the house before the children are exposed. Parsons," she said to the servant who had answered the bell, "I wish you to send Nolan"—referring to the chore-man—"the first thing to-morrow morning, to inquire why Hastnett & Haley have not sent the mattresses for the bed-rooms in the blue suite, as they promised. Mr. Haley told me himself," she added to her husband, "that they should be in the house a week ago."

Harold Stagg was quite content, as well as

used, to leave to his wife the settlement of all household details. He reserved the exercise of his own authority for serious emergencies, when it seemed to him that principles were involved. The only part he took in the domestic affairs was to pay the bills with great promptness, which he could well afford to do, as he was wealthy, and had a live and flourishing business. It was a relief to him that Emma took such a vital interest in everything appertaining to the adornment and sanitary welfare of their home. Although they had recently moved into a large and magnificent establishment, the cares incident to refurnishing had not been allowed to harrass him. Mrs. Stagg had strong convictions in regard to carpets and curtains and ceilings and dados, and the other crucial points in house decoration which are so apt to require a husband's judicial determination before a final choice is arrived at. She was, moreover, a rigid disciplinarian on the subject of plumbing, keenly apprehensive

of sewer gas, and eloquent as to the importance of traps and other appliances for its interception.

None but finished servants were tolerated in her household, where everything was conducted with a view to elegance of effect, and her eagle eye was swift to detect the smallest infringement of her precise and elaborate domestic rules. In appearance, she was tall, slim and nervous, with fine dark eyes, vivacious, brisk manners, and a rapid utterance. She had been married later than many of her contemporaries, but she had been making up for it ever since by her display of social energy.

Perceiving that his wife was engrossed by domestic details, Harold Stagg began to make preparations for his journey. Only an hour before, he had received a telegram, announcing the death of his brother-in-law, Silas Baldwin, the husband of his deceased sister Eleanor who had died a dozen years before, at the time her youngest child was born, leaving, beside that

baby boy, another son, and a daughter with the same name as her own. These children had continued to live in Illinois with their father, a civil engineer in the employ of a large manufacturing concern. Harold had not seen them since his sister's funeral, though he had never failed to remember his nephews and niece at Christmas-time, and he had duly received in acknowledgment of his gifts—which were invariably liberal remittances—three carefully penned epistles, the handwriting of which had steadily improved from year to year. An attack of pneumonia had carried off Silas Baldwin; Harold had not known that he was ill until he received the telegram, which was signed by Eleanor, announcing that her father had died the day before.

Harold knew enough of his brother-in-law's affairs to feel confident that Silas had left very little if anything in the way of property. To begin with, Silas had been handicapped at the time of his marriage by certain debts contracted

by his father, who had died suddenly, leaving his affairs in confusion, which debts he felt in honor bound to pay. Then, too, he had been in the habit of sinking whatever he could save from his salary in the development of various patents, for he was an inventor of diverse mechanical appliances, no one of which had proved profitable. Harold had on more than one occasion, both since and previous to his sister's death, advanced him money for this purpose. He liked and respected his brother-in-law, although they were but slightly acquainted, and there was little in common between them in point of tastes. But Harold's strict sense of rectitude had been early attracted by the resolute stand which Silas had taken as to the necessity of repaying what his father owed, and he had been willing to believe that some day his sister's husband would devise a machine that would be worth a mint of money. Harold had himself found it an easy matter to make money, or rather, his efforts to do so had been early crowned with success, which was

chiefly due to his own sagacity and strict attention to business. In the year of his sister's marriage he had organized a banking-house which to-day was one of the most prominent and prosperous firms in New York city.

By a little computation, he had figured that Eleanor must by this time be about eighteen, little Silas fourteen, and Harold, his namesake, twelve. No photographs of them had been received for several years, so that they must have grown beyond recognition. His own two children were mere infants, and the introduction into his household of his nephews and niece would confront him with all sorts of educational problems that he had not expected to face for another decade. But Harold Stagg was not the sort of man to balk when a resolution had been taken, or to let himself be worried by apprehensions of future difficulties. Moreover, he knew that here again he would be able to rely upon his wife. She was sure to have decided views on the various questions that would present

themselves. Already, in Mr. Sampson's boarding-school, she had suggested a happy method of dealing with the boys; doubtless she would be able to settle other points as they arose, with equal facility.

Accordingly, he ensconced himself comfortably in the smoking compartment of the train, and lit his cigar with a tranquil mind, thinking with self-congratulatory fondness of his dear Emma, from whom he had not been parted more than half a dozen days in the seven years they had been married. What a fortunate fellow he was to have such a wife! She was so energetic, so kind, so wrapped up in him; and then so clever, too, and such a delightful hostess, sprightly, vivacious, amusing. When he had offered himself to her, although he admired her ability and believed her to be affectionate, he had not expected to become so happy. She was not exactly the style of woman he had pictured to himself his better-half would be in his more youthful days, ere he had made money, and

when he was living in modest lodgings a quiet and somewhat sentimentally disposed bachelor. He had been a great deal of a reader then—of poetry, especially—and interested in pictures and music, and it had delighted him to dream of a snug domestic hearth sanctified and cheered by the presence of one who would sympathize with and encourage him in artistic tastes. The memory of this, if he ever thought of it, did not disturb him; he was contentedly happy, his business ran smoothly and prosperously, he enjoyed his fine establishments and the considera tion they gave him in the social world. If Emma's tastes were not precisely similar to his own, she certainly took no stand against them; on the contrary, she was perpetually surprising him on Christmas and his birthday with presents of rare illustrated editions in costly bindings, that she had selected with the aid of the book-seller, and she was prompt to applaud whatever he sent home in the picture line.

With such gratifying thoughts of his home as

companions, Harold dined satisfyingly in spite of his mournful errand, and, having finished the half bottle of champagne he had ordered, and smoked another cigar, he turned in and slept soundly. In thirty-four hours from the time of starting, he alighted from the train in the small manufacturing town where his sister's family lived, which was on a branch line. It was a place of some five or six thousand inhabitants, and seemed bustling. He noticed, as he drove along from the station, what he took to be a town-hall and a public library, an academy of music, and a soldiers' monument. There was water power, and on favorable sites appeared a row of factories. They were in the newer portion of the town, and around them clustered a half-dozen lanes of tenement-houses. Beyond, where there was more suggestion of country in the surroundings, were the residences, most of them old-fashioned farm-houses, though here and there "Queen Anne" or "Old Colonial" edifices had taken the place of the ancient order

of things. Here had evidently been the town or village before manufactures had invaded it, and the commingling of old and new had produced the effect of transition. But the gardens and stretches of landscape were not yet blotted out, and the air was full of the perfume of the spring blossoms.

In response to Harold's request to be driven to Mr. Baldwin's house, the lank individual whose vehicle he had engaged eyed him with an air of condoling curiosity, and said, under his breath, as though the corpse might still be within hearing:

"The funeral was yesterday."

"Yes, I supposed so."

It was decidedly a relief to Harold that, without any fault on his own part, he had escaped the ceremony. He had telegraphed his niece that he should start at once.

"Might you be related to the professor?" inquired his conductor, encouraged by the promptness of the reply.

For an instant Harold was puzzled; then he remembered that his brother-in-law had been connected with the faculty of one of the Western colleges for a few years as an instructor in physics and mechanics; hence, doubtless, the prefix to his name.

"Yes, he married my sister," he answered.

"I want to know!" said the man. "I want to know!" he repeated, giving a flick to the raw-boned animal he was driving, which, in point of many years and anatomy, was quite in keeping with himself. "Pity, now, they couldn't have waited for you. The professor is planted yonder," he added, pointing with his whip across the fields, "t'other side of the river. May be you'd like to drive round that way," he said, reining in his horse with a sudden jerk. "'Tain't more than a mile off your beat."

"No; I'm in a hurry to see the living. You can't do much for a man after he's in the ground," he added philosophically.

"I don't know but what you're right, mister.

I never was a great hand at visiting grave-yards myself. Tidy place, though, ours. Git up, Sandy; the gentleman's in a hurry. I suppose in this hot weather 'tain't easy to keep 'em," he continued, wishing, apparently, to find a satisfactory explanation for what would have seemed to him a breach of courtesy, in the absence of extenuating circumstances.

Harold, who was fond of quaint characters, found himself smiling.

"Did you know my brother-in-law?" he asked, by way of drawing out his interlocutor.

"Oh, yes; every one knew the professor," was the answer, with a judicial deliberation. "He was a fine man, the professor was; a trifle flighty in his notions, according to my lights, and not always knowing as to which side his bread was buttered; but a real Christian gentleman, and taking points from no one in his business, too, though he did plank out a good many dollars in them patents of his, that never showed him no profit, and that would ha' come in handy now, I

reckon, for them that's left. That's a fine girl of his; she favors her father, too. Going to stop long?"

The driver as he asked this question drew up before a medium-sized house of old-fashioned pattern, gabled and of weather-beaten shingle color, with a vegetable garden on one side. One-half the front piazza was screened by lattice-work over which honeysuckle was clambering in profusion. A neat, short gravel-path, skirted on either side by a bed of summer flowers, led up to it.

"Only a few hours, probably. Is this the place?"

"That's where he lived, sir, ever since he come here," said the man, muffling his speech again, by way of respect to the departed.

Harold Stagg passed through the little gate, and strode with a business-like step to the door, on which he sounded vigorously with the knocker that took the place of a bell. After a moment it was opened by a small boy who looked at him

doubtfully, as though he suspected who the visitor might be, but did not dare to make the first advances.

"I take it you must be Harold Stagg Baldwin," said the owner of the first two-thirds of the name.

"Yes, sir," said the lad, with a glad, sheepish smile.

"Well, I'm your uncle Harold," he said, patting him on the head. "I suppose your sister got my telegram?"

"Yes, sir. She's expecting you."

Whereupon his namesake seized the handle of the valise, by way of evincing hospitality and hiding embarrassment at the same time, and began pulling it into the entry.

As Harold Stagg followed him, a larger boy and a tall, slim young woman advanced from the threshold of an adjoining room.

"Ah, my dears!" he said, grasping Silas by the hand and embracing his niece, "I'm glad to be with you."

"Take uncle Harold's bag up-stairs, Hal," said Silas, and he himself laid hold of his relative's overcoat and proceeded to hang it up.

"Will you walk in, uncle," said Eleanor, ushering him into the room from which she had come —a sort of mixture of parlor and library, with books on shelves along the walls and scattered over the table, a writing-desk and a large globe, as well as various vases and other ornaments symbolic of a best room. It was a cosy little apartment; its furniture and stuffs, though slightly worn and slightly old-fashioned, were tasteful. Evidently the family was not afraid to use its best every day. "I suppose you are ready for breakfast," she added. "It will be ready in a moment."

"Yes, I *am* a little hungry."

Harold spoke cheerfully. An atmosphere of grief was instinctively oppressive to him. Moreover, he felt that he ought to try to enliven the wan-visaged family. Poor little girl! How pale and sad she looked, with dark places under her

eyes, that told of heart-ache and loss of sleep! She had grown out of his remembrance; he never would have known her. She was pretty, too, distinctly pretty, with a delicate, pensive style of face that matched well her willowy figure, but she appeared far from strong. Her black dress, devoid of the least ornament, was buttoned up close to her neck around a small white collar. He wondered what Emma would think of her. There was not a trace of embarrassment in her manner, as she did the hospitalities of the breakfast-room, offering him his choice of tea or coffee, and providing for his other needs with a serious composure that was astonishing to him, from its lack of consciousness, and yet was in no respect girlish. He could scarcely believe, until he convinced himself by inquiry, that she was but eighteen. Early contact with the responsibilities of life had developed her in certain ways beyond her years, and yet left her a child in many respects. Clearly she had had to be a mother to those two boys, who seemed to accept her as their oracle,

sitting sober and silent unless spoken to, shoveling in their food. How would she and Emma get on? What would Emma think of her?

"I have come out here, you know, to take you all back with me to New York," said Harold, presently, getting to the point at once, as was his wont. "It is your aunt's wish and mine," he added, breaking the silence that followed his announcement.

The two boys looked at their sister in a doubtful, bewildered sort of way. She was evidently thinking.

"That would be very pleasant, uncle, and it is very kind of you to suggest it; but as we have to support ourselves, wouldn't it be wiser for us to begin here at once where we are known?" she said, in her calm, dispassionate tone. "You see, papa left very little property — nothing, except his patents and this house, which is mortgaged for half what it is worth; so that we have no money to live on. Papa talked it all over with me as well as he could, the day before he died.

He knew he was going to die, and he was troubled because he had so little to leave us. He said he had been meaning to insure his life during the last year, but he hadn't the ready money to pay the premiums. I told him that he mustn't mind having spent his savings in developing his inventions; he had believed in them, and it was his duty, for our sakes as well as his own, to try to make them successful. We should be sure to get on somehow, and probably some day the patents would prove very valuable."

It was plain that she wished others to believe, as she did implicitly, that her father had acted for the best in everything. Doubtless, some one had already made disparaging comments as to the cause of their poverty.

"I don't think you understand me, Eleanor. I wish you all three to live with me. I have plenty of money for you all. Silas and Harold will be sent to school, and you will be brought up at home by your aunt, as other young ladies are."

A look of surprise irradiated by a gleam of pleasure came over her face, which was succeeded by her grave, anxious expression.

"I had been thinking," she said, "of being a teacher. I have been following the college studies under papa's instruction for nearly two years, and, if I can't get a place in the town here, I believe I could at Wolfborough or Danielstown, which are each only fifteen miles off by train, so that I should be able to come home every night, and the boys could attend the public school six months in the year, and do work in the summer months for the farmers until they were old enough to go to college."

"Nonsense, Eleanor," exclaimed Harold Stagg, as she paused in her recital, "I won't hear of such a thing. You forget I'm your uncle; your mother was my sister, and I intend to provide for her children!"

"It would be very nice," she said, reflectively, "if the boys could be looked after until they had a good education, but I've quite set my heart on

being a teacher, and I've thought it all over and planned it out, so that I'm sure there wouldn't be any trouble as to my getting along."

"I won't hear of it. What you need, my dear, is less thinking and planning, and more beef, wine and iron, to put color into those pale cheeks of yours. All study and no waltzing is precious poor diet for any young lady. Do you suppose you could arrange to start day after to-morrow? I can have your father's books and such other things as you don't wish to have sold stored or shipped to you in New York," he added.

"Day after to-morrow?" she ejaculated, in a tone of trouble.

"The sooner you have a change of scene, the better for you all. You will require to take nothing but clothes enough for the journey. Whatever you desire to keep shall be kept, and the house and the rest of the furniture placed in the hands of a real-estate agent to be disposed of to the best advantage. I am a busy man myself,

and, of course, I'm anxious to get back as soon as possible."

"It would be very nice for the boys," she reiterated, "and it's very, very kind of you, Uncle Harold."

"That means you'll start day after to-morrow morning."

"Would you like to go to New York to live, Silas and Hal?" she inquired, with motherly solicitude.

"We won't go unless you go, Eleanor," said the elder stoutly.

"That's right," said Harold Stagg. "She has got to go."

Eleanor's eyes filled with tears.

"I suppose I ought," she said, after a moment. "You mustn't think me ungrateful, uncle, or that I don't appreciate how good and generous you are, but it's hard to leave the house and the place where I've lived so long." She wept softly for a few moments, then wiped her eyes

and said, with quiet decision, "we shall be ready to start, uncle, day after to-morrow."

"That'll do nicely, dear," replied Harold, who had been inwardly debating how to deal with so unfamiliar a factor as a young girl's tears. "I'll telegraph your aunt Emma that you're coming."

The journey was uneventful, but very interesting to the boys, who quickly regained their spirits and became talkative under the influence of novel surroundings. They plied their sister with questions until Harold Stagg remonstrated and insisted on becoming their encyclopedia of useful and diverting information, in order to afford Eleanor an opportunity for rest. He himself endeavored at first to put life into her, as he would have phrased it, by adopting a cheery, half-bantering style of conversation and appearing very lively. He pressed her to eat of everything, and telegraphed for dainties that he thought she might enjoy. Rather to his dismay, however, his efforts proved unavailing. She uttered no complaint, and even smiled faintly at

his sallies, but she sat pensive and wan, unresponsive, and lacking appetite, thereby puzzling her uncle, who could better have understood torrents of tears than this dry-eyed, moping manner of grief. He found that she liked to talk about her father, whose companion and confidante she seemed to have been, and toward the end of the journey they branched off, on one occasion, on books, each surprising the other by discovering that their tastes in poetry were not dissimilar. Harold was taken back to his bachelor days, when he was fond of reading, in his spare hours, Shelley and Keats and other poets, for whose poems of sentiment his niece felt no less partiality, and he was struck by her familiarity with everything worth knowing, in a literary way, that had been published of late years. He himself did not pretend nowadays to read everything that was going, but he knew the names of the prominent publications, and it was evident that Eleanor was familiar with most of them. All she needed, he reflected, was a lit-

tle knowledge of the ways of the world and a few suggestions as to her attire, in order to make him a proud uncle; for while so many of the young women in society were mere butterflies or dolls, did not she possess, in addition to a pretty face, the charms of intellectual culture? Emma would understand exactly how to transform this inconspicuous cygnet into a dazzling swan.

CHAPTER II.

AT HOME.

"Here we are," said Harold Stagg, as the carriage stopped before a fine residence.

A flood of light from the doorway dazzled Eleanor's eyes, and she wondered at the flawless individual who supervised their passage into the hall, until her uncle said:

"Parsons, has Mrs. Stagg gone to bed?"

"No, sir; she is awaiting you in the drawing-room," answered the butler, in a subdued voice, that harmonized with the noiseless manner in which he was relieving them of their wraps and bags. "She was about to retire, sir, when your telegraphic message arrived," he added, in a

lower tone, intended for his master's ear. "Supper is quite ready, sir."

"Well, we're ready for it, aren't we, boys? Twenty minutes of twelve! Mercy on us!" he exclaimed, as he closed his watch with a snap. "I dare say you were never up so late before. Now, dear, if you've finished prinking," he said gaily to Eleanor, "I'll take you in and introduce you to your aunt."

Eleanor blushed vividly, and turned from the hall mirror, before which she had instinctively paused a moment in order to straighten her bonnet, that she was conscious was awry. Her uncle stood laughing and chuckling at her confusion. Just then there was a rustle of a robe, and a tall woman came speeding down the stairs, exclaiming:

"I'm so glad you've come! I heard one of the children crying, and I'd gone up just for a moment, thinking I should be sure to hear if you came in."

"Yes, cherub, here we are, safe and sound. Eleanor, Silas, Hal, this is your aunt Emma."

"How d'y' do, my dears? I'm very glad to see you," said Mrs. Stagg, kissing Eleanor on the cheek, and beaming kindly on the boys, who, between the butler, the electric lights, the spacious hall and this new splendid relative, stood confounded. "You must be tired out, and we'll go right in to supper."

"What do you suppose, Emma, I caught this young woman doing just now? Beautifying herself in the glass! It's New York air. I wager that within a week she'll have been inside of every dressmaker's and milliner's shop in the city." Whereupon Harold Stagg laughed gleefully.

"I imagine you have discovered by this time that your uncle's a sad tease," said Emma, who was leading the way, having already, in a single glance, the capability of which poor Eleanor realized, comprehended the primitiveness of her niece's ideas on clothes. She reflected that had

Harold been a malicious man he could not have thought of anything more invidious than to call attention to the poor child's toilet, to say nothing of the fact that Eleanor was, and must remain for the present, in deep black. Such lack of perception on the part of her better-half prompted her to turn and link her arm sympathetically in the young girl's, while Harold, to whom it had suddenly occurred that his allusion to millinery was the reverse of well-timed, followed behind, endeavoring to conceal his self-consciousness by vigorously rubbing the shaggy heads of his two nephews, and trolling a bluff glee the burden of which was that his heart was true to Poll.

CHAPTER III.

SOCIAL PERPLEXITIES.

An hour later, the Baldwins were comfortably ensconced in the blue suite, and Emma was hearing from the lips of her husband an account of the journey. Although she had mapped out in her mind a probable programme, she had waited to see the children, before giving her imagination full swing; but now that they appeared to be very much what she had hoped, all sorts of thoughts were churning in her brain regarding their adaptation to her household and the proper exertions to be made in their behalf. The boys were of just the right age for Mr. Sampson, as she had expected, and in the autumn, after a summer by the sea-side, they could be packed off

with brand-new outfits, and she be saved from further responsibility, except in vacation time, for several years to come. As to Eleanor, she was agreeably disappointed. To be sure, Harold had written that she was a quiet, unobjectionable sort of girl, but she had not been able to dismiss from her mind a haunting idea of a showy, slangy young person with gushing manners, and mourning bedizened with jet, until the real niece stood before her. Emma congratulated herself that she would have very plain sailing; Eleanor was dowdy, unsophisticated and retiring, but a single season in society would work the necessary changes. She was rather pretty now, and she would be very fetching, indeed, when she learned to hold herself properly and to dress her hair with some regard to what was becoming. How preferable to have to deal with an unobjectionable child who had no preconceived ideas, than with a bumptious coquette whose bad manners were already formed.

Hence Mrs. Stagg went to bed in very good

humor, feeling that she was quite equal to her new responsibility, and with nothing but kindness in her kind heart for the three orphans to whom she had consented to supply the care of a mother. This care at first appertained to their wardrobes. In another six weeks the Staggs were to move to the sea-side, and before that time the trio had to be supplied with an entire assortment of summer clothing. They had to be taken to be measured and then taken again to have their things tried on, then the things had to be marked and afterward packed. Mrs. Stagg gave herself up to this occupation with unreserved cheerfulness. She bustled, she gave precise orders, and waxed indignant when the shop-keepers disappointed her; there was a bevy of sewing-women in the house from morning until night, and the hall was occupied at the close of each day by a profusion of bundles from haberdashers and outfitters and boot-makers and milliners. Three days before the appointed date, everything was in the house,

and Emma had the satisfaction of beholding her nephews and niece by marriage, well shod, well gloved and well hatted. To these arrangements, made by their energetic aunt for their welfare, the Baldwins made no demur. Boys, as a rule, are hostile to new garments, but though Silas and little Harold doubtless regarded askance the black broadcloth jackets and trousers and stiff derbies bought them for best, their fancy was tickled by the blazers, knickerbockers and tennis flannels picked out for them. No less was it an excitement to Eleanor to have a variety of gowns, cloaks and hats, which, though necessarily somber, gave her figure a far more graceful effect even in her own eyes, than she had supposed possible. She was wholly content to let her aunt Emma take everything into her own hands, quietly professing ignorance as to cuts and styles, and supremely trustful of her relative's judgment in such matters. This frame of mind, while in a certain sense it called forth Mrs. Stagg's

pity, could not fail to cause her to feel gracious toward the young girl, who so very properly and yet so very uncommonly put such blind confidence in her good taste.

The sight of the sea—they had never seen it before—aroused the enthusiasm of the Baldwins, the first they had manifested since their arrival, as Emma said to her husband. Hitherto, they had accepted everything as it came, in non-committal silence, which was not otherwise than pleasing but scarcely exhilarating to their benefactors. They ran about the beach and over the rocks behind the Staggs' villa, with the keen energy of mountain goats. They picked up shells and watched the wavelets creep up the shingle until it all but lapped their shoes, chattering like magpies, and the chatter continued at the tea-table, which was what attracted the attention of their aunt. Even the perpetual sadness that had become a part of Eleanor's expression had lifted, and her eyes sparkled as she talked, in such a way that her uncle remarked that the

sea air had already begun to act as a tonic. Of a truth it had; from that day on, she began to gain physically, both in strength and appearance; her cheeks lost their sallowness, and her step regained its natural elasticity. She was constantly out of doors; if not disporting with her brethren on or by the water, walking or riding through the woods and fields, for the place combined the attractions both of the sea-side and the country. The boys had a sail-boat together, with a man to give them lessons in seamanship and swimming, and in the stable was a dainty little mare entirely at her service, whether for use in harness or as a saddle horse. She had learned how to ride as a child, and she now delighted in the exercise, enjoying it frequently in the company of her uncle Harold, who, though obliged to be in New York during the middle of the week, was always with his family from Saturday until Tuesday.

At least three afternoons in every week, she drove in state by her aunt Emma's side, in the

victoria. There were three or four favorite drives, in the course of which they met a variety of other vehicles no less effective; there was constant bowing in passing, and everybody looked very stylish. Her aunt told her who the people were, and made amusing comments on them. Some of these people called on Eleanor, which she was given to understand was very kind of them, considering that she was not yet out; and she went by invitation a few times to take luncheon informally with girls of her own age, in the neighborhood, where, after a little preliminary interchange of formalities on her account, there was a general chatter about persons and things of which she knew nothing, and ladylike gabbling. Her aunt returned some of these courtesies for her, by asking two or three of the young women at a time to bring their work and pass the morning, in order that she might get to know them better.

On these occasions, the girls would dismount from their phaetons, looking patterns of unruf-

fled coolness in their pretty starched summer gowns, with bunches of flowers at their waists, and a group would be formed at one corner of the piazza, where they would sit and sew until luncheon time. There was no suggestion of going out sailing or rowing, or hunting for shells on the beach, or wild-flowers in the woods, as Eleanor was apt to do on other days. Sometimes one of the number, by turns, read from a novel, while the others sewed, but commonly they simply chatted at their fancy-work with general reference to the one great event that was uppermost in all their minds—coming out into society. Several of them were half out already; that is the bars had been let down so far as to allow them to appear at a college class-day or some garden-party, and their experiences were recounted, with coy allusion to personal triumphs, for the edification of their less emancipated sisters. The talk was of the successes of the reigning belles of the hour, of the number of german favors bestowed upon this beauty and

the number of wedding-presents upon that, concerning the good looks of one boy and the popularity of another. To Eleanor they were invariably courteous, making a due number of polite inquiries as to her previous life, and as to how she liked the East in comparison with the West; but, naturally, they soon began to talk to one another of the topics in which they were interested, and Eleanor, for the most part sat and listened. What is more, she continued to sit and listen as the summer went on, without contributing her share to this particular kind of conversation, which supplied the cement of sympathy between the other girls. They continued to be very polite to her, but it was evident to Mrs. Stagg that somehow Eleanor did not get on with them.

CHAPTER IV.

ELEANOR'S SUCCESS.

"Eleanor is certainly very quiet," Emma said to her husband one evening, "and very young for her age, The best thing for her, in my opinion, would be to have her come out as soon as possible. Of course, it wouldn't be decent for her to do so before the 1st of January; but, I think, by that time, seeing no one knew her father here, so that it wouldn't shock anybody else's feelings, it would be perfectly proper. If she were like most girls, I should naturally advise, on grounds of respect, waiting for another year; but, you see, Eleanor was eighteen last autumn,

and if she were to wait she would be twenty before she came out, which, considering her excessive shyness and quietness, would be the worst thing possible for her. I am afraid of the poor child becoming morbid. All she seems to care for is wandering through the woods or sitting on the beach by herself for hours, or else reading. It can't be good for her. I like to see girls at her age bright and taking an interest in things. It's to be expected that she should mourn her father, but it isn't healthy to allow her grief to prey on her mind."

"'It is the green-eyed monster that doth make the food it feeds on'—Shakespeare," said the young banker, jollily. "No, that's jealousy; but it applies to grief just as well. You let yourself get harping on a thing and it's all up with you."

"Then you agree with me?"

"As to what?" said Harold, noticing his wife's anxious air.

"The propriety of her coming out after the 1st of January."

"Any plan that you and Eleanor fix on will suit me, cherub. I leave it all in your hands."

"You have said you mean to give her a ball," Emma remarked, meditatively.

"So I do; a handsome one. It'll be a good excuse for throwing open our new house."

"Well, then I shall consider it settled; only I shall have to be thinking about her clothes at once. I don't suppose the child will make any objections."

She felt, nevertheless, a little anxious on this last head until she had talked to Eleanor, who, however, said that she was not competent to decide as to the proper time for laying aside her mourning, and that her aunt was the best judge.

"I should be very sorry, dear, to give you the impression that I was lax in such matters," said Emma, seriously, "but I think your future happiness may be very dependent on your coming out this winter; so it seems to me you do right in being a little less strict in following custom than in ordinary cases."

Eleanor merely assented; but next day, when they were alone together after breakfast, she suddenly confronted her aunt with the inquiry why there was any need of her coming out at all.

"Need of your coming out!" Emma said, in a tone of astonishment. Then, after a moment's attempt to grapple in her own mind with the extraordinariness of such a proposition, she replied, with dignity: "Your uncle Harold depends on your coming out, Eleanor."

The girl looked at her vaguely.

"I should be very happy without it," she said.

Emma surveyed the calm recalcitrant in a dumfounded fashion that was still more haughty. She feft that she was called on to combat a frame of mind radically out of gear, and that she must speak unequivocally.

"It is not a question of your present happiness or of your unhappiness, Eleanor, but of your whole future. If you do not show yourself in

the world, and become familiar with its usages, how are you to fit yourself for your part in life, whether as a wife—for you are likely to be married—or, even assuming that you are not—as—as your uncle Harold's and my niece?"

Mrs. Stagg conscientiously based her argument on high moral grounds. She had no patience with the cynical or misinformed people who habitually stigmatized society as hollow and frivolous, or who declared that girls came out merely to find husbands. Such critics were either envious, or did not know what they were talking about. It was too much the custom for those on the confines of good society to sneer at those on the other side of the hedge without knowledge of their feelings and principles.

"But I cannot dance," answered Eleanor, which was an objection quite apart from the real ones which had prompted her to speak.

Her aunt felt inexpressibly relieved. Misled by notions that are common among persons of her class, Mrs. Stagg had begun to fear that

her niece's scruples were born of that dreadful democratic spirit which argues that a country school-ma'am without social experience is the peer in breeding and elegance of any lady in the land. Horrible visions of the consequences of such a standard had floated before her eyes, which now beamed benevolence on the culprit, as she said:

"I wrote last night to make arrangements about that, my dear. You will dance beautifully. You have just the figure for it, and you are light on your feet. Mlle. Laurens will come three times a week until you are proficient, and after that I will practice with you, and we will invite in two or three young men informally some evening, to give you confidence."

Emma spoke with glib cheerfulness; a load was off her mind. The child was merely shy and needed encouragement; a little morbid as the natural result of her affliction, but nothing worse.

The remaining weeks at the sea-side passed

uneventfully. Emma had been rather impatient to get back to town in view of the preparations necessary for the ball, and for launching her young charge into the gay world. The next eight weeks were spent largely in shopping. Eleanor was carried off in the coupé after breakfast every morning, on a tour of the stores. It took a fortnight before all the materials were chosen, for Mrs. Stagg would have nothing but the choicest and the best, scrutinizing, considering and reconsidering, hesitating and coming back to shops after leaving them once, and then leaving them again without purchasing. And when the fabrics and colors were fixed upon, another fortnight was spent in trying on and altering and trying on again until Emma herself, to say nothing of the fortunate young person in whose behalf all this weariness of the flesh was being undergone, felt fairly ready to drop. But to break down at this stage was out of the question.

In the fashionable circles of the city, anticipa-

tion as to the grand ball to be given by the Harold Staggs in honor of their niece was running rampant. Rumor said that it was to be a most magnificent affair, and Mrs. Stagg was firmly resolved to prove rumor ignorant of the real truth. She lay awake at night planning the minutest details of the occasion; with her own eyes she superintended the polishing of the dancing-floor until it was like wax, and then she was in a fit for fear it might be too smooth; she amazed the caterer by the definiteness of her instructions as to hot ducks and fresh relays of champagne in the small hours of the morning, and confounded the band-master by threats of ruining his business in case the quality of the music was not unexceptionable. The entire house was in arms for a month prior to the great event, and little else was talked about in the establishment.

Eleanor, too, to judge by her ejaculations and manner, had caught the infection. She seemed all in a flutter, tripping about the house with

bright eyes and a becoming flush on her cheeks, silently inspecting the arrangements, now and again gliding over the parquet floor in feverish trial of her newly acquired steps, and undergoing, in regard thereto, successive transports of self-congratulation and despair. Her quiet reserve became tip-toe ecstacy in presence of the sumptuous simplicity of her own dress and the exquisite richness of her aunt's; and when on the evening itself the climax was capped for her by her uncle Harold's gift of a flashing diamond star, which he presented to her as she made a shy but entranced entrance, the last of the three, into the brilliantly lighted ball-room, with the cheering encomium, "How charming you look, my dear!" there were tears in the little girl's eyes, and her voice was choked as she stammered out her delighted thanks.

Her emotion brought answering smiles to Mrs. Stagg's face, who felt that at last the ugly duckling, thanks to her fostering and persistent care, was beginning to do her credit. The ordeal,

before she had been able to beget a proper temper and awake enthusiasm, had been long and wearing, but her labors were finally crowned with success. Eleanor stood before her a thoroughly passable young woman, exquisitely dressed, diffident, but not awkward, and free from peculiarities. As she surveyed her with lynx-eyed scrutiny through her lorgnette, she said to herself with complacency that the child certainly looked remarkably well, and was positively pretty. Her heart warmed toward her, and she tapped her bare shoulders caressingly with a fan after detaching an offending thread from her skirt. There was pride and content in her heart; she felt that she had done well by her niece, and that she need not be ashamed of her handiwork.

For the next three hours a steady stream of festively clad women and swallow-tail-coated men swept past the spot where Mrs. Stagg had stationed herself to receive. Eleanor stood at her side, a trifle in the background, courtesy-

ELEANOR STOOD BEFORE HER, A THOROUGHLY PASSABLE YOUNG WOMAN. *Page* 56.

ing low when her aunt courtesied in mute acknowledgment of the announcements made by the ushers in attendance as to who was who. Before this bewildering ordeal was properly at an end, a youth invited her to waltz; thereupon, having received a smiling nod of permission from her aunt, she went away with him to the ball-room, which was already possessed by whirling couples. Successive partners claimed her, and with each new trial her confidence increased. Soon she was flying over the smooth floor as blithely as any, flushed with triumph, radiant, panting, indifferently conscious that her dress was torn, scarcely hearing what was said to her and scarcely knowing what she said. Then it was supper time, and she had a chance to sit down and try to comprehend the gala scene, while more youths flitted about her like moths, hardly introduced before they were gone, yet sometimes returning for a moment as though not unwilling to become fascinated.

From the standpoint of the social critic, there

could be no doubt that the affair was a grand success. Everybody was having a pleasant time, from the boys and girls just let loose upon the world, to the old stagers who stood around the sideboard in the supper-room, tasting Harold Stagg's wines, and calculating in undertones how much he was probably worth, and what his house had cost him. The whole establishment was freely admired, and so genuinely that Emma's spirits were at full height; she sailed right and left among her guests with amusing badinage and gracious smiles, putting people at their ease, and giving a tone of vivacity to the occasion, which, by the time the german was under way had a contagious effect.

The german was led by Eleanor and a young man experienced in such matters, and daylight was peeping through the windows before the last polka had come to a close, eliciting a melodramatic sigh from the half-hundred dancers who still remained on the floor, and stopped now only at the command of obdurate parents. Fif-

teen minutes later, Emma and Eleanor were sitting on a sofa sipping hot bouillon by daylight, amid the *debris* of the ball-room. Harold had slipped away to bed, but the two women preferred to talk the party over before retiring. Eleanor's cheeks were still flushed with excitement, and she seemed as loath to separate herself from the mass of bouquets and german knickknacks in her lap, or pendant from her person, as a hen from her chickabiddies.

"Well, my dear," said Emma, with a contented smile that lapsed into a yawn as she leaned back against the cushions, "what did you think of it?"

"Oh, I had a gorgeous time, and I'm so sorry it's over. I enjoyed every minute, and I shall never forget your kindness, Aunt Emma—yours and Uncle Harold's."

"This is only a beginning—of many similar times, I mean. As you get to know more people you will enjoy yourself still more. I must say,

though, you were decidedly a belle. How many favors?"

"Sixteen in all; and I felt beforehand that if I got even two I should be fortunate. Aren't they lovely?" she added, burying her face in a bunch of roses, and holding it out for inspection.

Emma smiled cogitatively.

"Who gave them to you?" she asked.

"I've been trying to remember. There were several from men I didn't know the names of. Mr. Moore gave me a bouquet, so did Mr. Page; and one of the plumes was from Mr. Warren. Then I think a Mr. Porter or Cotter—I couldn't make out the name exactly—"

"Alec Trotter, probably."

"Oh, yes; I remember one of the others called him 'Alec.' Well, he gave me a bouquet."

"He's a great swell, but he won't be flattered when I tell him that you called him 'Porter' and 'Cotter.' The Trotters think there is no name to conjure with but theirs."

"Oh! you mustn't let him know, Aunt Emma."

"You foolish child! Tell me, how did you get along with Mr. Page?"

"Very well, I think. He talked to me at supper and several times in the german. He dances beautifully."

"Owen Page is a very nice fellow," said Emma, unequivocally.

"It's a pretty name. There was a cobbler at home named Owen Glynn, and I used to think that if I ever wrote a novel I would name the hero after him; but Owen Page is more aristocratic."

"He is named after his grandfather, who died two or three years ago, leaving a great deal of money. His mother and his father are dead, and he and his two sisters—they were both here to-night—came in for the whole of it. Last winter he was in Europe, but I fancy he means to devote himself to going about at home this year."

Such was Eleanor's introduction into society,

and, as her aunt had foretold, the ball at the Staggs' was but the first of a series of entertainments at which she appeared during the season. Emma knew well that nothing but eternal vigilance would save her from becoming merely one of the mass of girls who went to party after party to dance with the stupid or awkward men. Thanks to the instruction bestowed on her, she did not offend by peculiarities, and was even extremely presentable; but though pretty and piquant-looking, she was not much more so than the average, and she was undeniably quiet—dull even, Mrs. Stagg believed in her heart of hearts. It was only reasonable to expect that after the glamour of the ball was over she would sink into obscurity. Why not? She was Harold Stagg's niece, but he had children of his own, and might well have more; no one knew anything about her except this, and really there was nothing else to say. So the clever woman argued, and accordingly felt conscientious reasons for continuing strenuously her good work in behalf of

her young relative. She had started to do her best for Eleanor, and she would continue to the end without faltering. Not that she found it irksome or chafed under it; on the contrary, it rather interested her; but she never disguised from herself for a moment the difficulties of the situation.

And so to begin with, she carried Eleanor everywhere, day after day and night after night. They lived in a perpetual whirl of luncheons, teas, dinner-parties, receptions and germans, waltzing into the small hours, and getting up towards noon. Emma never took her eyes off her charge, giving the child undivided attention and the full social benefit of appearing under her wing. Moreover, the new house became the scene of occasional snug little dinners and select musicales, devised, as everybody understood, for the purpose of bringing Mr. Stagg's niece, Miss Baldwin, still further before the notice of the social world, and everybody said how unselfish it was of a busy woman to take so much trouble

for her husband's kith and kin. Emma was determined that people should not drop Eleanor; she should not only be invited everywhere, but she should have a reasonable amount of attention. She could never be a belle, of course; that was out of the question; but the desirable young men should not be permitted to ignore her; she should be always present, and on every occasion be beautifully dressed, and be kept in the foreground as much as possible.

There was so much more credit due to Mrs. Stagg for her self-sacrifice and devotion from the fact that, though she put on such a resolute front, she felt secretly from the first by no means confident that her efforts could prove successful. If, as she said to herself on more than one occasion, Eleanor were only full of animal spirits—one of the saucy or rollicking kind who amused men by saying whatever came into their heads—the chances were that, with so much backing, she would get along. But would any one trouble himself to be more than decently civil to a young woman

without prospects, who was pensive and retiring, and, though possibly intellectual, so far as book-learning went, without the faculty of entertaining people in general society? Emma was apt to sigh whenever she thought of the outlook. Therefore she saw with feelings which closely resembled emotion, the evident liking which Owen Page was beginning to display for Eleanor's company. She had been gratified on the night of the ball by his showing the child some attention, but the idea that it was more than the ordinary politeness which a gentleman is apt to show at the coming-out party of a pretty girl never occurred to her, though naturally she was pleased at it, and had made a point of letting Eleanor understand that he was the desirable kind of man to know. When, at each of the next few parties, he again spoke to her, Emma supposed that he had felt pity at seeing her deserted, comparatively speaking, in spite of the ball; for though she had not been absolutely

without partners, there had been no repetition for her of the triumphs of the first evening.

The assumption that he danced and talked to her out of charity seemed, however, improbable, in the face of his continuing to do so; and Emma, though she did not dare to frame any extravagant hypothesis, could not refrain from asking herself what it meant. Why should a man like Owen Page devote himself to Eleanor unless he were more or less fascinated by her? To be sure, he might simply be flirting; but, no, he would scarcely be cruel enough to try deliberately to engage the affections of a simple-minded, simple-mannered girl solely for the gratification of his own vanity; for there was so much higher game. There could be no doubt that he was attracted by her; otherwise, why did he never let an entertainment pass without seeking her out? Not that his attentions were particularly ardent or exclusive, but they were unremitting. Eleanor was one of the girls he always danced with and talked to. It might

mean absolutely nothing; nine chances out of ten it did. But even granting that he were amusing himself at her expense, his constant attendance on her must necessarily give her prestige; and there was, of course, the bare possibility—a possibility which stirred the blood in Emma's veins whenever she thought of it, though she promptly dismissed it as out of the question—that he might be falling in love with her. Stranger things had happened, and in affairs of the heart it was frequently the unexpected which did happen. King Cophetua married a beggar-maid, and why not Owen Page, Eleanor? Not a soul could say that she would not make him a thoroughly suitable wife.

While thus pondering and avoiding premature elation, Emma took care not to let the grass grow under her feet in connection with the matter. She knew enough not to frighten off the possible lover by indecently frequent invitations to the house, or by seeming to take particular notice of his attentions, but she kept her eyes

constantly open and lost advantage of no opportunity of throwing them together. Though, to tell the truth, there was little need, as it appeared, of intervention or diplomacy on her part; the young millionaire himself continued to seek every opportunity afforded for continuing the acquaintance. He called on Eleanor, he took her out on his coach, he gave her a theatre-party, he invited her to dance the german with him, and one day he sent her a basket of magnificent roses without there seeming to be any excuse for it. This last overt act fairly took Emma's breath away, and that evening, when she found an opportunity to speak to Harold alone, she remarked:

"Do you know, my dear, that I am really beginning to think that Owen Page is seriously attentive to Eleanor."

"Why don't you say something?" she exclaimed, with impatience, as her husband continued to smoke placidly. "Do you realize what that means? I don't half dare acknowl-

edge it myself, but I verily believe he is seriously smitten. He scarcely takes his eyes off her, and you saw the superb basket he sent this morning. My dear, *do* you realize what it means?"

"I realize that I admire your superb coolness in picking out about the richest young man in New York as a husband for your damosel," he said, removing his cigar with an amused smile. "Only the best is good enough for you, ha, ha!"

"You are crazy, Harold. Do you imagine that I ever in my sober senses would have conceived for a moment that there was the slightest chance in that direction? Of course, if I had, I would have made the most of it, as any woman would. I don't pretend to be superior in virtue to the rest of my sex, but do give me credit for a little common sense. Why should Owen Page, who has the pick of half a dozen cities to choose from, if he is matrimonially inclined, devote himself to a girl like Eleanor? Very likely it means absolutely nothing; I have tried

to shut my eyes to it and persuade myself that such is the case, but facts are facts, my dear. And the most difficult part of all for me to make out," she added, in a confidential whisper, "is what he finds in her."

"I don't see why Eleanor isn't all right," Harold replied, stoutly, after a moment.

"Well, so she is, of course; I'm not saying anything against the child, especially in view of the fact that he seems to be in love with her; but you must understand what I mean. If it weren't that she's your niece, do you suppose you'd ever give her a second thought, if you were introduced to her, beyond agreeing that she was a rather pretty, well-dressed little girl, with sufficiently good manners and not much snap. The manners and the dressing are mine, though they count just the same, and I'd have done my best for Eeanor if she'd been a great deal worse than she was, but there's no use in trying to make her out anything superior to the common run, for she isn't. Compare her with a

dozen girls one could mention, and she would be nowhere. You know it as well as I; and because we are fond of her, there is no use in refusing to recognize the truth. If Owen Page offers himself to her, it will be a marvelous instance of good fortune."

"Don't count your chickens," remarked her husband, somewhat doggedly.

"That is precisely what I am avoiding doing; but surely you'll agree that she'd be very lucky."

"Oh, Page is a good fellow enough, and he has stacks of money, if that's what you want."

Emma looked painfully into distance; then, with a writhe of her neck, said, with dignity:

"One would think, from your tone, I were a mercenary marriage-monger. I 'want' nothing. I have brought out Eleanor just as I would my own daughter, and under far greater difficulties. If, within the next five years, she were to marry any respectable young man of our acquaintance, we ought to feel very grateful, and yet, when, in her very first season, a man

whom everybody considers charming, and who would be able to give her all that money can buy, deliberately pays her marked attention, and saves her, if nothing else, from having a horrid time wherever she goes, you, Harold Stagg, get up on a high horse and make disagreeable insinuations!"

"Now, cherub, you know I was only fooling. You were bearing Eleanor in the market, so I thought I'd have a drive at the other fellow, to get a rise out of you. Come, now, I'll agree it's an ideal match; and if it ever comes to pass, I'll see that you get all the credit for it."

"Which is precisely what I shall not deserve, goosey-poosey," said Emma, whose good humor was restored, leaning over her liege's chair and dallying with his short curls.

CHAPTER V.

A GEOLOGICAL NESTOR.

The weeks flew by; the season subsided into Lent, and after it there was another gay spell; then came the spring, and people began to make their summer plans. The Staggs were to go to their house at Beverly, as usual, and Eleanor openly expressed her pleasure at the prospect of returning to the sea-side. There had been no further developments in the courtship—or more properly, no culmination of it, for Mr. Page's devotion was not a whit less marked. Indeed, its persistency was a constant source of encouragement to Mrs. Stagg, whose vigilant scrutiny had failed to detect any signs of flirtation on his part. He continued to send Eleanor, from time to time, beautiful flowers, he rode with her in the

park, he walked with her on Sunday afternoons, and, what was even more significant, he had ceased to pay similar attentions to other girls. Still, he had not proposed. But, as Emma sagely reflected, if ever an impatient thought seized her, presumably he was of the deliberate kind, and in so serious a matter as matrimony, preferred to move circumspectly. Nor need their departure from town prove an interruption, inasmuch as he had declared his intention of frequenting the Beverly shore with his yacht, ostensibly for racing purposes, but there could be little doubt as to what magnet really attracted him thither.

A more haunting uncertainty in Emma's mind at this time was as to her niece's feelings, regarding which, strangely enough in her own estimation, she was considerably in the dark; so much so that she was beginning to deem it her duty to have a definite talk with Eleanor on the subject. And yet she realized the danger of an ill-considered interference. It might well

be that the child was shyly in love, in which case an inopportune or meddlesome word might freeze her into secretive coldness toward her lover and induce deplorable consequences. She had believed it wiser thus far to invite confidence by indirect allusions rather than to demand it, but her forbearance had borne no fruit in the way of discovery. Could it possibly be that Eleanor was unaware that Owen Page was seriously devoted to her? That was the deduction Emma sometimes drew from her placid, unconcerned way of accepting his attentions. Eleanor seemed to enjoy being with him, and always admired his roses, and was ready to accept his courtesies, but her enjoyment and readiness were of such a rational, unembarrassed kind that Emma could not help feeling uneasy. Could any one in love appear so unconscious, so free from coyness and coquetry? Not unless she were exceptionally deep, surely, which seemed very unlikely in this instance. Moreover, Emma could not help reflecting that the

innuendoes she had made use of from time to time with delicacy, and yet suggestively as it appeared to her, ought to have set the child thinking, to say the least. Nothing had been left unsaid which could present Mr. Page in a favorable light or accentuate the good fortune of any girl to whose society he was partial. Ought she to go further than this and point out the fact that he was evidently fascinated by her, and that if she were not suitably encouraging she might lose the best opportunity of making a brilliant match that she would ever have, in all probability? The necessary words had several times trembled on her lips, and yet she had refrained from uttering them.

One day, some weeks after they had moved to Beverly, while Emma was still in the throes of this dilemma, Harold Stagg telegraphed that he was bringing Professor Phineas Baldwin home to pass Sunday. This was an elder and only brother of Eleanor's father, a geologist, who had just been called to an important educa-

tional position connected with his specialty, in New York. He was a bachelor, and had lived a nomadic kind of life in the interest of science, residing in various portions of the West, and, though he was intimate with his brother, with whom he corresponded vigorously, Eleanor, who was very fond of him, had seen him but little. At the time of Silas Baldwin's death he was abroad with an exploring expedition under the auspices of the government, but on receipt of the news he had promptly offered to give the children a home before being apprised that they had been adopted by the Staggs.

Emma, as it happened, had invited a select party of fashionable people to dinner that evening, and it did not altogether please her to have to make room at her table for a professor who might be very learned, but was almost certain to be queer; accordingly her frame of mine was by no means improved when Eleanor, in response to a casual question as to what sort of person her uncle was, said:

"Oh, he's the funniest-looking little man you ever saw, very short and round, with a face that reminds one of an owl; he blinks at you out of his great eyes just like one; but he's kind as can be, and if you get him talking on a subject in which he is interested he can be immensely agreeable."

"Really?" said Emma, faintly, with something like a little sigh in spite of her habitual aplomb; and as she gazed out over the sea she saw accurately in her mind's eye a blinking little personality sitting silent from course to course, unless the Devonian period or some other equally august subject were introduced.

As though divining her aunt's quandary, Eleanor suddenly exclaimed, with genuine fervor:

"Why couldn't Uncle Phin. and I dine by ourselves in the nursery? It would be such fun! We have lots of things to talk about; no one would miss me, and he would enjoy it ever so much better, I know. It wouldn't cause any extra trouble, for I will carry the dishes up and

down myself, and then your dinner wouldn't be disarranged."

"Don't be absurd, dear," replied Emma, though she could not help wishing that such a programme were consistent with due hospitality. "Your uncle will dine with us, of course. If I had only known in time, however, I would have asked one or two people likely to be more congenial to him."

Eleanor's description of the bachelor professor's appearance was certainly not exaggerated. In the early stages of acquaintance he evidently sought refuge in an imperturbable taciturnity, relieved if he were brought to bay by a free use of the word "ma'am" in addressing ladies of every age, which prompted Emma to keep him as quiet as possible after making him known to the company. He was a man of fifty, with a thick brown beard and a bald head. His large eyes took in the surroundings in contemplative fashion, and he seemed in nowise disturbed that he had not brought evening clothes

with him, an omission which weighed considerably on Emma's mind, not for the reason that it made any real difference, but because she was sure that he, poor man, must feel so embarrassed. When he re-entered the room, just before dinner, in his gray homespun suit, with a red bandanna protruding from the breast-pocket, she really pitied him, but she could not help congratulating herself that she had placed his seat at table between herself and Eleanor.

After they sat down to dinner, Uncle Phineas continued for some time very silent, beaming so effusively, however, on his niece, that Emma began to fear lest he should hold her hand or indicate in some other equally unconventional way the satisfaction he felt in being with her again. He was an excellent trencher-man and did full justice to the good things passed to him without seeming to heed the small-talk that, repressed at first by his presence, soon bubbled forth regardless of it. There was gay chatter, some of a personal character, and by and by

several humorous anecdotes, one of which amused Professor Baldwin so much as to draw from him a guffaw of such intensity that there was a pause after it, and a lady opposite him surveyed him through her lorgnette interrogatively, while the young men winked at each other as much as to say: "Who is the humorous old party?"

"That reminds me of an incident that happened when I was in California some years ago," said Uncle Phineas slowly, in a quaint, dry way that made everybody stop eating and listen. Emma felt on tenter-hooks, and she glanced anxiously at Eleanor; but she had turned toward her uncle with an air of delighted interest. There was nothing to do but let him go on; and go on he did in so graphic and absorbing a manner that several of the company were chuckling with satisfaction before the end, and when that came there was a roar of delight.

"That's a capital story!" exclaimed some one,

and Harold Stagg, who was laughing heartily, checked himself to cry:

"A glass of wine with you, Professor!"

"The old boy is waking up," he whispered, after putting down his glass, to the lady next him.

There was now a disposition to include the professor in the general conversation, and he rewarded expectation by contributing two or three more pertinent stories, one of which led to his beginning to talk about his travels. From one matter he branched off to another, and soon the entire company was hanging on his words. His observations as well as his experiences were out of the ordinary run, and in two or three instances he had had narrow escapes that elicited ejaculations of horror from the ladies, and envious "by Joves!" from the sporting gentlemen present. When at last Emma gave the signal to leave the table, everybody felt the dinner had been too short.

She was all smiles, and in passing from the

room seized the opportunity to squeeze Eleanor's hand, and whisper: "He's delightful, my dear!" His very want of toilet seemed to her now to add to his effectiveness, and she almost hoped that when he returned to the parlor he would talk about the Stone Age, or deliver an informal address on shells, so exquisite was her sense of relief. When he did return, however, he relapsed into oracular silence, which he was not cojoled into breaking beyond the needs of bare civility before the company separated. On the contrary, he himself presently slipped away with Eleanor across the lawn for a saunter along the shore. As they did not return in time, Emma explained his absence on the ground that he had probably found some bowlder or crustacean specimen which had lured him into oblivion of everything else, a sally which evoked a general laugh as they said good-night. There was much to be pardoned to a man of his evident peculiarities, who had seen so little of society, and, really

he had made himself remarkably agreeable, and quite borne off the honors of the occasion.

This was doubtless the general verdict, but underneath it in the minds of nearly every one was a sentiment of pity for Mrs. Stagg, that she should have on her hands such a white elephant. And in truth while her fears were tranquilized, Emma felt far from easy in the company of Uncle Phineas after the glamour of his dinner-table successes had been partially dispelled by a night's sleep. In mapping out the arrangements for the next two days, at the end of which he was to take his leave, she was not averse to allowing Eleanor to appropriate him to her heart's content, though she insisted on accompanying him on a preliminary drive, and pointing out to him precisely to whom every house of importance along the shore belonged. Then she became willing to let Eleanor sit beside him in the back seat of the wagonette, while she got in front with Harold, with a glowing consciousness of duty performed. From the ceaseless

flow of words, it was evident to her that they were enjoying themselves. Every now and then she caught a word that made her prick up her ears and perhaps give Harold a nudge if the subject were especially serious or abstruse. Nor did they seem ever to get to the end of what they had to say; when they were not driving they were strolling through the woods or climbing over the rocks, as much absorbed in each other's society as two young lovers. Emma reflected that if she only would appear more like that when she was with Owen Page, there would be no cause for anxiety.

Professor Baldwin, on the morning of his departure, took leave of his hostess with a show of deep respect that was pleasing to Emma. To his thanks for her hospitality, he added some enthusiastic words, out of his niece's hearing, as to Eleanor's charms.

"If my brother were alive, he would say that he could have done no more himself; and I

thank you and your husband, ma'am, for your goodness and your care."

Mrs. Stagg had no intention of deprecating her right to the praise bestowed, especially as the thought was in her mind that, if her niece by marriage had not been deprived of her father, she would have been a very different-appearing person; but she was much gratified, and she said, with a modest smile:

"Eleanor is a nice good girl."

"Yes, ma'am, and more; she is an intelligent, noble woman!"

Emma was slightly appalled by the enthusiasm of the professor's tone, which was heightened by the further expansion of the owl-like eyes.

"We have done our best," she murmured.

"And you have your reward, ma'am. She is an unusually fine young woman. I am an old bachelor, ma'am, but I envy the man who wins her as his wife."

For an instant, the thought crossed her mind that Eleanor might have confided in him, but she

dismissed it as improbable. Still she felt that she looked a little conscious as she replied, with slightly mysterious unction:

"We have that in mind, Professor Baldwin. We will take care that she does not throw herself away."

CHAPTER VI.

FEMININE STRATEGY.

An hour later, she and Eleanor were sitting on the piazza.

"I think your uncle really enjoyed his visit."

"I am sure he did—every minute of it."

"He seems very fond of you."

"Oh, he is; and I am so glad to think that he is going to be in New York. He was telling me about his quarters; he has taken three rooms in a boarding-house, and, I'm sure, from the description, that he can't be very comfortable. I've promised to pay him a visit, and put him to rights. He says his socks all need darning," added Eleanor, with a laugh. She had looked up from the morning newspaper, to answer Mrs. Stagg's remark, and she now resumed her read-

ing. A moment later, she said: "I see here that Mr. Page's yacht *Barbara* started from New York day before yesterday, on a cruise northward."

"Ah! then he will soon be here," said Emma, blithely.

Eleanor sat silent for a few moments, looking out over the sea.

"Has Mr. Page no regular occupation, Aunt Emma?" she asked, suddenly.

"He is not in business, if you mean that," replied Mrs. Stagg, after a brief contemplative survey of her fancy-work. "You know," she added, "there would be no use in his going into business, for he has all the money he needs, and in these times it is much easier to lose money than to make it."

"I wasn't thinking of business especially."

"Well, you know he isn't a lawyer or a doctor. That is, he doesn't practice law. He may have studied it and been admitted to the bar, for all I know; I shouldn't wonder if he had. It's a very

good thing for a young man to do, I've understood. If you mean by 'a regular occupation' a profession or anything of that sort, he has none."

"I thought possibly he might have some strong interest I did not know of. I was aware he was not in any active profession."

"'Interest?'" echoed Emma. "I should say he had a great many interests." And then, as Eleanor seemed to be waiting for her to continue, she said, firmly, but with a little warmth: "He is excessively fond of horses and his yacht. I believe he had something to do with designing the model of his own. He is a splendid shot. He has traveled a great deal, and speaks several languages. He has a small stock-farm, and I've heard him say that when he settled down, he expected to enlarge it and live in the country most of the year. Yes, I should say, on the whole, that he had a very strong interest in farming—in farming and in animals. Naturally, at present he spends a good deal of his time in society. One thing is certain, though, my dear,

and that is he will be ready to do anything in reason that you want him to."

A sudden impulse had seized Emma to make this sally, and she looked up at her niece as she spoke, with a meaning smile. Eleanor started and flushed violently. Then she bent over her work, and there was an awkward stillness. Presently Emma interrupted it by saying:

"I have known a great many instances where women have exercised a vast amount of influence over men that were in love with them. There is Tilly McVane, for instance; her husband drank like a fish before she married him, but he promised, if she would have him, never to touch another drop, and he never has to this day; and they are happy as turtle-doves. What woman has done woman can do again, Eleanor, dear; though, to tell the truth, I don't think one would desire any serious change in Mr. Page. I have never heard a word breathed against him on the score of habits. I know he is charitable, and is always doing kind things; and though he may

not have your taste for books and study, I have no doubt that he would be only too ready to take an interest in everything that interested you. Look at me, I scarcely ever opened a book before I was married, and now, what with selecting them for Harold, I consider myself quite a literary person. It isn't wise for people to be too much alike at first."

"Do you mean to say, Aunt Emma," said Eleanor, when these remarks were concluded, "that you think Mr. Page is in love with me?" Her cheeks were glowing vividly as she spoke, and she had clasped her hands in front of her.

"You ought to be the best judge of that yourself, my dear," said Emma, suavely, but rather alarmed withal, by the young girl's serious demeanor.

"I should never have thought of such a thing if you had not implied it."

"Well, well, what harm if he is a little enamored?" replied her aunt, smoothing out her work again. "But let me say, he has not made a con-

"DO YOU MEAN THAT YOU THINK MR. PAGE IS IN LOVE WITH ME?"—*See Page* 92.

fidante of me. I am merely judging by appearances. Perhaps I am entirely mistaken."

"It would alter everything." Eleanor was answering the query. "What makes you think so, Aunt Emma?" "He has been very kind—very, but it never occurred to me that it could be possible—that he—"

She broke off without finishing, looking at her aunt with a distressed air and twisting her fingers nervously.

"You are very young, Eleanor." Emma was provoked with herself for having spoken. What she had feared and yet believed impossible was the case; the child had not realized the situation. However, it was too late to draw back now; she might gloss the matter over if it came to the worst, but she had better open the child's eyes a little. "What did you suppose was the meaning of all Mr. Page's attentions—his flowers, his constant preference for your society?"

"I knew he liked me, of course."

"Liked you? That is rather a vague term, my

dear. Didn't it ever occur to you that he 'liked you' very much better than any one else?"

"I'm afraid that I didn't think much about what he meant," she answered, desolately. "I've been acting wrongly, Aunt Emma. It was pleasant going on and on, and I didn't realize. Oh, yes, I've been very wrong."

"Nonsense. What is there wrong about it? You may have been a little obtuse, perhaps, but you'll know another time, or rather henceforth, for may be there won't be another time. You mustn't mind me, dear," she added, noticing that Eleanor writhed at the innuendo; "I'm only teasing. It is very likely his own fault if you didn't know. Men are often so fearfully commonplace in their speech even when their actions seem devoted."

Eleanor said, with fervor, after a moment's silence:

"I am very much obliged to you, Aunt Emma."

"For opening your eyes? You are entirely

welcome. It occurred to me that it was just possible you might not be realizing the full significance of what such intentions ordinarily imply. It is apt to be a shock to a girl if a man offers himself without having made his intentions pretty clear beforehand, and in such cases she sometimes says things she wouldn't say if she had been more or less prepared, though no girl is ever quite prepared."

Emma spoke calmly. She was disturbed by Eleanor's manner, and yet she judged that her shrinking from the idea of being seriously sought in marriage proceeded from the novelty of it, and that time would effect a change. It was advisable to give her an accurate glimpse of the truth, and yet veil it sufficiently not to offend or disgust her maidenly instincts. She hoped she had accomplished this, and accordingly she was little prepared for the reply she now received.

"I think, Aunt Emma, the sooner I get to work the better. I ought to have done so

before," she continued, as Mrs. Stagg gazed at her in blank bewilderment, "but I was having such a pleasant time I let myself drift along."

"'Work,' Eleanor? I don't understand you."

"You know I have always meant to be a teacher. Uncle Harold persuaded me to come East with him on account of the boys, but now that they are established at school, and I have had all the rest I need, I should like to try to get some pupils, or a situation in a college."

"Eleanor, what *do* you mean?"

"I have my own living to make, Aunt Emma."

Mrs. Stagg broke into a nervous laugh.

"Are you getting tired of us so soon, my dear? I feared that we should not be able long to compete with the attractions of the 'wild and woolly West.'"

"If I can do equally well here, I should prefer to remain rather than go West; but I imagine that there are more opportunities in some of the smaller new Western colleges or academies for the kind of position I would rather have."

"Eleanor, are you crazy? Do you realize what you are saying? Pupils! A position in a college! And all because I suggested that a young man might be in love with you! I gave you credit for more sense."

Emma rocked her chair with offended dignity that found vent for its pent-up annoyance in another scornful laugh. Could the child possibly be in earnest? It was too ridiculous; and yet there she sat, with her hands clasped before her, and an intense expression which might betoken anything.

"No, Aunt Emma, Mr. Page had nothing to do with it, except that if it had not been for him I should very likely have begun to make some inquiries before we came to Beverly, as to my chances of finding employment. I ought to have done so, but, as I have already said, I was weak enough to put it off a little longer. I am proposing merely to carry out the plan I have had in mind all along—my life-work."

Emma looked at her curiously.

"You are talking gibberish. Do you not consider it part of a woman's 'life-work' to be well married?"

"If it so happens, certainly."

"'So happens!' One would think I were referring to the bite of a mad dog. I am older than you, Eleanor, and I have seen the world. There is no more foolish, not to say unnatural, attitude for a woman to assume, than to set her face against marriage. A self-chosen old maid is a pitiable person."

"I have no wish to be an old maid," said Eleanor, with a smile. "Indeed, I hope to be married some day."

"Then why this rigmarole?"

"I do not see what my being married or not being married has to do with the question of supporting myself."

"Supporting yourself? Do you not know, Eleanor, that, in bringing you to live with him, your uncle Harold took upon himself your support? That is no longer an open question. He

intends to provide you with a home until you are married, or, if you persist in remaining single, you need have no fear that he will turn you out of doors or leave your future unprovided for. Your uncle is a just man."

"I know he is, and that both of you are far kinder to me than I deserve. But do you not understand, Aunt Emma, that I would rather make my own way, that I prefer to be independent and not a burden on anybody? I was brought up with the idea that I should have to work, and the thought of it has always been a joy to me. This year in society has been an incalculable advantage to me; I realize that perfectly, and, believe me, Aunt Emma, I am grateful to you, and I shall never forget all you have done for me, but I shouldn't be happy to go on in this way any longer; I want to do something."

The eager words and demeanor startled Emma. She bent her brows on her work and rocked restlessly. She could see nothing but ridiculous folly and misguided waywardness in the propo-

sition. Harold would never consent to such a scheme; it was almost foolish to think or argue about it. Still, the child seemed alarmingly in earnest, and it could not safely be predicted what she might not be capable of. Presently, Mrs. Stagg replied with deliberation:

"There is no objection that I can see to your doing something, as you call it, Eleanor. You may do whatever you wish. If you think it necessary to your peace of mind to earn a little money by your own exertions—which strikes me, I must say, as slightly quixotic, considering how well off your uncle is—but, as I say, if it would make you happier, there is no possible reason why you should not utilize any talents you have. I know of several girls who have dressed themselves or added materially to their incomes through what they have made by painting on china, or contributing to the magazines or by giving whist lessons. Whist is so much the fashion now, that, I dare say, if you insist upon it, I could get you a class easily enough.

In that way, you would be able to satisfy your conscience, and still at the same time avoid any radical change in your surroundings."

"I am afraid," said Eleanor, shaking her head sadly, "that my conscience could not be so easily satisfied, or rather, Aunt Emma, that it isn't a question of conscience only, but of preference for a particular mode of life. I am interested in study and in books, and—and in the atmosphere which belongs to them, and I should never be happy among people—" She stopped short, embarrassed how to proceed.

"Why don't you finish? I know quite what you wished to say—'among people who don't go in especially for anything of the sort.' Well, we don't pretend to be more literary than the average person, but there are other things in the world fully as important as books, Eleanor, and one of them is common sense. Some women in my place would say: 'Go and be a teacher in a Western college, if you wish to,' and wash their hands of you. But I cannot bring myself

to believe that you are really serious when you talk so."

Emma rose and haughtily proceeded to lower one of the awnings a little.

"I am so sorry; I can see you think me very ungrateful."

"I suppose you have a right to throw away your opportunities if you choose to, just as no one could prevent you from throwing yourself overboard if you were so inclined; but, as I said to your uncle Phineas this morning, I have done my best. Before you resolve on anything foolish, however, I should advise you to consult with him. You may rest assured that your uncle Harold will not consent to your leaving this house, and I cannot believe that Professor Baldwin has so little knowledge of the world as to sanction anything of the sort. You spoke of paying him a visit; why don't you write to him and tell him you will pass a few days with him?"

"I should like to immensely. I will write

to-day. I will talk matters over with him. I have talked with him already; he is sensible, Aunt Emma, and would be the last person, I know, to advise me to do anything that is foolish. It is not he that suggested my leaving you."

"I did not suppose it was," said Emma, relieved, nevertheless, by the announcement. She had been thinking hard as to a plan for thwarting, without seeming to thwart, this vagary of Eleanor's as she still chose to consider it; and, on the whole, a change of scene seemed the most feasible. There was, of course, the danger that the queer professor might sympathize with his niece's notion, but, on the other hand, Emma felt convinced that, in spite of Eleanor's declaration to the contrary, the real reason for her extraordinary frame of mind was the suggestion of Mr. Page's devotion. Were she to remain on the scene brooding over the matter, feeling all the while that she was being opposed, there was little chance of her becoming rational, but let her

change her surroundings and have an opportunity to think matters over quietly, and she would very likely realize that she was making a fool of herself. She was accustomed to Mr. Page's attentions and it might be well to let her try going without them—to let her contrast also the commonplace and probably unattractive atmosphere of a boarding-house with the luxury of her present home.

The more Emma thought over this project, the better it pleased her, and she felt almost jubilant when Eleanor announced that she had received a letter from her uncle urging her to come as soon as possible. She abstained from further discussion of the points at issue, believing that to ignore what had been said and trust to Eleanor's common sense to re-assert itself was the proper course to pursue, and she sent her off, a day or two later, with equanimity, although Owen Page's yacht was in the offing; for, as she said to herself, the child would be sure to be stiff and constrained were she to meet him in her pres-

ent spirit, even if she were not absolutely repellent. It would be no difficult matter to explain her absence, on the score that her uncle was in need of her, so that Mr. Page would see that it was unavoidable. Moreover, would it not serve to whet his ardor? A too easy conquest is apt to beget indifference, and this departure, in the teeth of his coming, might suggest to him that he was not as yet absolutely indispensable.

Altogether, Mrs. Stagg flattered herself that the situation was not nearly so serious as she had at one moment feared, and she even did not feel that it was necessary to complain to her husband of Eleanor's threatened exodus, so little did she doubt that her niece's mental aberration was merely temporary. He expressed some surprise that she should visit New York in the heat of summer, but Emma pointed out in such eloquent terms the loneliness of the professor, and the undoubted need in which his apartments stood of a dust-discerning feminine eye, that Harold made no demur; moreover, he reflected that this

act of unselfishness on the part of Eleanor was doubtless the result of the ever vigilant thoughtfulness of his better half, and he asked himself: "Was there ever such a woman?"

CHAPTER VII.

A QUEER DEN.

Professor Baldwin's apartments were indeed in need of female scrutiny; at least any woman would have said so; though it must be confessed that the professor himself considered that he was lodged very satisfactorily. The first thing one noticed on entering his living-room, or den, as he called it, was a superabundant odor of tobacco, which, except when his pipe was out, was supplemented by a haze that produced the effect of a murky London fog and imparted an air of greater dinginess to the already dingy carpet and curtains and furniture. Eleanor came in upon the professor just as he had finished breakfast and had settled down in an easy-chair for his first smoke. He bounded

up from his seat with so much heartiness that he joggled violently the center-table on which the tray containing the remains of his breakfast was resting in the midst of books, geological specimens, maps, music-rolls and sundry smaller paraphernalia, all lying in perfect confusion and overflowing on to the piano.

"Peach-blossom, is it you?"

"Yes, Uncle Phin, here I am."

"Well, well, this is too much luck for an old bachelor like me! This hand-bag isn't all, is it? Where are your other duds?"

"Oh, they're coming. I've brought a trunk nearly as big as this room, Uncle Phin, so you must make up your mind to put up with me for a good long visit. I came on the boat from Boston last night with Uncle Harold, and I thought I'd surprise you by dropping in early."

"Your room has been ready for two days. Had your breakfast?"

"Yes; I wanted to come without it, but

Uncle Harold insisted on taking me to Delmonico's. This is your parlor, I suppose."

Her eyes, as she spoke, made a circuit of the room and then rested for a moment inquiringly on a tall, modest-looking man who had risen at her entrance and was standing in the background with his pipe in his hand.

"Yes, this is my parlor, also my breakfast-room, my study, my library—in fact, everything except my bed-room, which is there," and the professor nodded toward a door on his right.

"I should call it your smokery," she said, with a roguish sniff.

"Should you, indeed, Miss Saucebox! Well, I am not going to shoulder all the responsibility for the atmosphere. Here is a young friend of mine who is entitled to at least half the blame. Allow me to introduce William Struthers, rising electrician and devotee of science."

The stranger bowed respectfully. Eleanor saw that he had large dark eyes and a pale, rather thin face, full of quiet determination.

But for the moment she was most keenly conscious of the embarrassment which her presence had caused him and which the professor's words of introduction served only to intensify. He wore a short fustian jacket which had seen a great deal of service, and which seemed rather small for his muscular-looking figure. He had hastily thrust his pipe into one of the pockets of this, burning his fingers in the process, a misadventure betrayed only by a momentary gasp that made his confusion all the greater.

"It is your room, Uncle Phin, and I should say, therefore, that you only are responsible for it," she replied, gayly.

"Very well, miss, but henceforth it is your room and you only are responsible for it. Do you hear that, Struthers? My authority will no longer protect you."

The young man, who had recovered from the dumfounded attitude in which he had remained for some moments, threw open both windows

"I HAVE COME ONLY TO MAKE YOU MISERABLE," SAID ELEANOR. *Page* 111.

and began to agitate his big arms in order to drive out the tobacco smoke.

"I have come only to make you miserable," said Eleanor, with a laugh. "I really do not mind, Mr. Struthers. See, uncle is smoking again. He knows that I was only teasing him."

"I had finished, Miss Baldwin. Besides, it is time for me to get to work," he stammered. Thereupon he bowed again and walked to the door.

"Now do not work too hard," cried Uncle Phineas. "There is the rock that will bring you to grief if you do not have a care. How goes the great discovery?"

"It is too soon yet to tell anything."

"Not too soon to hope. Some day, Peach-blossom, we will storm his sky-parlor and investigate for ourselves. These inventors have a way of hiding their light under a bushel for fear of somebody else discovering their discoveries before they are completed. I hate a suspicious nature."

"My work-shop is a very unattractive place for ladies," Struthers said, diffidently. "But if Miss Baldwin would like at any time to see it I shall be pleased to show her what there is to see."

"Is your work-shop in this house?" she asked, interestedly.

"Yes; in the attic. Some day before you go you may like to see; the view from the roof is rather fine."

"Who dares talk of her going? Avaunt, young man, she is never to go; I shall keep her forever; and woe betide him—or her—or it, who dares to try to rob me of her," and the professor put his arm about her neck, caressingly.

"Dear old Uncle Phin!" she said, laying her cheek against his, as the young man left the room.

"A promising lad. I am becoming fond of him."

"Who is he, uncle?"

"I have told you nearly all I know. I found

him in the house when I arrived. His father was killed in the war, his mother died three years ago, worn out with the struggle to earn a living for herself and boy, and just at the time when he was beginning to take the burden from her shoulders. But come, let me look at you. How stylish we are, to be sure, in our fine dress and bonnet!"

"How unkind, when I had purposely chosen my plainest summer frock because I knew you hated fuss and feathers."

"And, pray, who has been enlightening you as to my tastes? Because I live in fusty lodgings and smoke a pipe will you deny me all sense of beauty? But you are waiting to see your room. The lady who occupies it has gone to the sea-side to recuperate. She is a music-teacher."

Thereupon he conducted Eleanor up another flight to the front of the house, where she found herself in a snug little room, plain but clean and refurbished. There were reminders of the previous occupant over the walls and mirror.

Christmas cards and painted texts and a water-color or two and family photographs and a canary in a cage hanging from a chain in the window, which was caroling as she entered.

"The landlady, Mrs. Todd, was going to remove the bird," said the professor, "but I told her that maybe you'd like it."

"Oh, I should, very much."

"Miss Strange—that's the music-teacher—wept because she couldn't take it with her for her month's holiday. Poor little lady! She leads a solitary life, I fancy. I don't mean you, you fat, yellow gormandizer," he added, thrusting his round face against the bars of the cage, "but your mistress. She toils while you warble and plume your fluffy bosom. That's the way of the world, however; there are wage-spinners and wage-spenders. Peach-blossom, you will find this room hot and maybe stuffy, I warn you; no sea-breezes here. Such air as there is passes over broiling pavements; instead of an ocean view, you look out on tall tenements."

While speaking he threw open the green blinds and let in a flood of glaring sun.

"You cannot alarm me, Uncle Phin. I am neither sugar nor salt. I can see that I shall be perfectly comfortable and happy here."

"This house is a hive of workers, but most of the bees are droning for the moment, like the little lady here, rejoicing in a few weeks of hard-earned rest. Beside our friend Struthers in the attic, and a band-master, and a broker's clerk on the first floor, there is only myself to keep up the reputation of the establishment."

"Who are the others?"

"Oh, there are half a dozen, at least—a teacner of French, a teacher of German, two more clerks, a widow lady and her daughter who paints on china. Work is rampant hereabouts you see. You know your way down to my den—excuse me, your parlor now—and when you are rested you will find me there, ready for anything from a picnic to a voyage in a balloon."

"Don't talk to me of picnics; I have come to

work, Uncle Phin. You must get out those socks. I intend to overhaul your entire wardrobe. While you work at your lectures, I will darn and mend, and sew on buttons—and talk, for I want your advice."

"Advice, eh? This sounds serious! Can it be that you have come to consult an old bachelor on the subject which he is supposed to be most ignorant of? I thought your aunt had a significant look when she assured me that you would not be allowed to throw yourself away. Have I guessed right?" he added, perceiving that Eleanor flushed and looked uncomfortable.

"No, uncle; nothing of the sort, if you refer, as I suppose, to the possibility of my being married. I don't know what Aunt Emma may have said, but I'm not interested in the matter at all."

"It was I that suggested it to her, ha! ha! I told her that I envied the man who won you as a wife, and so I do, Peach-blossom."

"But that is quite another thing from wishing me married, isn't it, Uncle Phin?"

She spoke so beseechingly that the professor instinctively felt a desire to be rid of the subject. With all his predilection for his niece, he could not help remembering his profound conviction that women were strange creatures, and that he shrank habitually from any dealings with them that were likely to induce emotional display. He did not pretend to have divined the cause of Eleanor's discomposure, but he thought he perceived that she was distressed. When he spoke, the idea had come to him that she might be intending to ask his blessing, cleverly couched under the head of advice, on her approaching nuptials; but to be made the confidant of a lovers' quarrel, or to be sought to help a young woman choose between rival suitors, was something he had not bargained for. So he assumed the shy, sphinx-like expression that was characteristic of him when he felt ill at ease, and said:

"There are certain matters concerning which no one can be so safe a judge as a young lady herself—least of all an old fellow like me."

Thereupon he shambled through the doorway, unheeding the look of surprise which Eleanor cast at him on account of the words. But by the time he had reached his own room, he was reproaching himself for his behavior, and wishing the words unspoken. The poor child had come to him in a quandary for counsel, and he had checked her off. He was a brute, a coward, unworthy of having such a lovely apparition take up her abode beside him to keep his heart still green. It was inexcusable; it was barbarous. "The women always," he murmured gloomily, as he lit his pipe again, and it was with a clouded brow that he settled to his task of preparing his geological lectures for the coming season.

Eleanor stood still for a moment after he had left her.

"He thinks it is some love affair," she said to herself. "How ridiculous! What can Aunt Emma have said?"

Then she began to inspect her room, pensively at first, but the arrival of her trunk drove her

thoughts into other channels. When it was unpacked, she went down-stairs with her work-box to seek out Uncle Phineas. He was deep in his papers; so, with a nod which signified that he was not to let himself be disturbed, she glided into the bed-room and re-appeared with a pile of stockings. There was no interruption to their respective labors until just after the stroke of twelve, when a rap on the door announced a boy with a tray containing a supply of sandwiches and two pots of beer.

"Mahomet Ali!" exclaimed the professor, "I had forgotten." And, though his large eyes gleamed hungrily, he said: "Not to-day, Adolph. I am going out to luncheon. I will send you word when I want you again."

"No, no, Uncle Phin; not on my account. I—"

"We will go to Delmonico's, Peach-blossom," interrupted the professor, rising and jingling the silver in his pocket.

"We will do nothing of the sort, Uncle Phin.

You are to make no change in your habits. Adolph," she added, addressing the boy, who stood irresolute, listening to the dialogue, "you may leave Professor Baldwin's luncheon just as usual."

The lad grinned and glanced at his employer, who extended his palms and shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say, "You see how helpless I am;" after which Adolph approached the table, and placed upon it one of the plates of sandwiches and one of the tankards.

"May I not have the rest?" she asked, as he turned to go.

The attendant grinned again.

"Please, ma'am, this is for Mr. Struthers up-stairs."

"Oh!" she murmured, with a little laugh, "that *is* awkward."

The professor surveyed her gloatingly.

"It would serve you right to go hungry," he said; then he added: "You may leave the other portion, Adolph, and tell Mr. Struthers,

when you see him next, that it was stolen from you on the staircase by a beautiful Amazon. Go now, and do not let him famish long."

"You will tell him nothing of the sort, Adolph," said Eleanor, appropriating a sandwich. "I trust to your discretion to let him know nothing about it."

"Yes, ma'am," said the delighted youngster, as he withdrew.

"This is a true workingman's repast," said Uncle Phineas, as he set down his pewter after a draught.

"And am I not a working-woman?" she said. "At least, I wish to be. But where," she asked, after a moment, "do you—do the other people here take dinner? This is only a lodging-house, isn't it?"

"Some of them go to one place and some to another for all their meals. There are several decent houses in the neighborhood where food is provided three times a day at so much a week. Our friend, Struthers, habitually patron-

izes one of them. It's the cheapest method, but as I have served my apprenticeship at it elsewhere, I have been in no hurry to make a selection; indeed, I have lately induced him to vary his *cuisine* by playing the Bohemian with me during the very hot weather. He was looking peaked and needed a change. So we breakfast in this room and lunch as you see, and we take our dinners—our meal of the day—at whatever restaurant happens to hit our fancy. We are great hands at discovering out-of-the-way little places where one can dine appetizingly for a mere song, and perhaps the next day we hie away to one of the beaches to enjoy the crowds, and banquet in a large pavilion, to the music of a band."

"How delightful!" cried Eleanor. "And you must do the same now that I have come, and take me with you."

Uncle Phineas smiled at her enthusiasm.

"It is a dog's life at the best, Peach-blossom," he said, with a sigh, draining his tankard. "A

trifle more diverting than the other, perhaps, but a dog's life at best. No, my ambition is to be able to settle down some day in a little house of my own, where I can have just what I want, as I want it and when I want it. I'm beginning to see my way to it, too. Queer fancy for an old bachelor to have, isn't it? And my only fear—ha, ha!—is that I shall be morally certain in time to marry my housekeeper!"

"But I shall be your housekeeper, and you can't marry me."

"You!" he exclaimed, with gay incredulity. "By that time, you"—he was going to say, "will have a house of your own," but he stopped embarrassed, fearful of introducing the dreaded subject.

"Oh, no, I sha'n't, Uncle Phin," she answered stoutly, divining his intention. "I know what you were going to say, and there isn't the slightest chance of it."

"Well, well," he responded, shyly, beginning

to put away his papers, "one can never tell what a year will bring forth."

He had finished his studies for the day, and he now proposed to Eleanor that she should accompany him on several errands which he had to do. They sallied forth together, and after visiting the institution with which he was connected and a library where he had to mouse among the shelves for a few minutes to consult authorities, they sauntered through various bookstores and picture-galleries with which the professor was familiar. He chatted volubly, and he seemed to know more about the city already than most people who had lived there during their lives, especially its older history, and the picturesque tales, half legends, that were interwoven with it. Eleanor listened with delighted interest, and many a passer turned to look back with a curious smile at the strange contrast presented by the shambling, herring-eyed little man and the tall, stylish young woman at his side.

It was nearly dinner-time when they returned,

and the professor expressed surprise at not finding Mr. Struthers in possession of his den.

"Ah," he said, on second thought, "he has feared to interrupt us. Good boy! He has thought we had many things to talk about. And so we have; but such modesty deserves its reward. Shall we invite him to join us, Eleanor?"

"By all means, Uncle Phin."

The professor went clambering up the necessary two flights, and after a few minutes reappeared with Mr. Struthers, who had doffed his fustian jacket for conventional attire.

"So you have had a good day, young man?" said Uncle Phineas.

"I have been trying some interesting experiments."

"Only think of it, Peach-blossom, he keeps lightning on tap in his laboratory. We all live in constant fear that he will burn the house down. What sort of a fume is rampant to-day?" the professor added, sniffing the air. "One day he perfumes the atmosphere with sulphureted

hydrogen, and the next Mrs. Todd is cooking salt-fish in the basement. Chemist *versus* cook, and I don't know which is the worse."

Eleanor laughed, and said:

"What is the special thing you are trying to discover, Mr. Struthers?"

"A mere bagatelle," interjected her uncle. "This audacious youth has the hardihood to maintain that it is only a matter of a few years—or months, is it?—when our steam-engines will be run by electricity instead of steam, and he hopes to be the fortunate man to demonstrate that it can be done successfully. But if I once let him loose on his hobby there will be no dinner for us," he continued, with a bantering smile at the embarrassed youth, whose tongue his pleasantry had fettered. "I warrant now, Peach-blossom, that you have five minutes of prinking yet to do, and a woman's five minutes are always ten."

"I'll be right down, uncle," cried Eleanor, as

she gathered up her belongings and ran up the stairs.

Fifteen minutes later they were at table in a snug restaurant, one of the choicest, into which the professor conveyed them, bumptiously announcing to the electrician, whose eyes were dilating at such prodigality, that he had thrown economy to the winds.

"I am spreeing it—spreeing it; and all on a woman's account. And there will be no headache to-morrow," he whispered, jubilantly, as he began to peruse the bill of fare with the manner of a man who meditates extravagance. "It will do you good, too, young man. A pretty face assists the imagination."

"I have realized that already," answered Struthers, whose visage, the moment after he had spoken, glowed from the unaccustomed use of compliment.

"A *puree* of green-peas and soft-shell crabs, and a *filet a la bordelaise* to begin with," began

the professor, reflectively, "and—and some champagne, of course."

"I'm afraid, uncle, if you go on at that rate, you will never have that little house," said Eleanor; "it will be a castle in Spain."

"Never you mind, young lady," he replied, drawing a fat, old-fashioned leather wallet from his pocket and tapping it significantly. "Everybody must have an occasional fling, and this is mine. If I become riotous, it will be from joy at having you with me. Bring everything," he added to the waiter, "everything that is good; you will know. We want plenty, and the best, for we have lunched upon sandwiches."

The waiter smiled broadly, and bowed low. Doubtless he scented a fee in the professor's sportive manner and language, for he began to bustle diligently.

These infected likewise Eleanor and Mr. Struthers, who were soon chatting and laughing gayly, heedless of the hot atmosphere of the crowded restaurant. Trifling remarks and inci-

dents convulsed them all, and there was scarcely a pause from the *puree* of green-peas to the dish of rosy peaches that followed the raspberry ice-cream.

"Coffee?" asked the waiter, in a confidential undertone.

The professor looked at his watch.

"Now, young people how are we to spend the evening? I have two suggestions to make; either we will go to the theatre, in which case we had better take our coffee now, or we will adjourn to the 'roof park,' in which case, we will take it there. Which shall it be?"

"I fear," said Struthers, with a laugh, "that 'roof park' is scarcely intelligible to Miss Baldwin."

"It sounds very interesting," said Eleanor. "Let us go there by all means. It is too hot for the theatre."

The two men exchanged glances of amusement.

"So be it," said the professor, "'roof park' it is;" and he called for the bill.

They retraced their steps to the boarding-house, and while Mr. Struthers was fumbling in the lock with his door-key, Eleanor inquired why they had come back.

"We are going to the 'roof park,'" answered Uncle Phineas.

Mr. Struthers led the way up-stairs, past Eleanor's story and the professor's story, and yet another story to the highest landing, which was illumined only by the moon streaming through the skylight. A short, ladder-like flight of steps led up further to a sort of trap-door.

"Shall I get the banjo?" said Struthers, pausing on the lowest round.

"The idea of asking such a question," replied the professor. "Do we not always have the banjo?"

"You are one person, sir, and Miss Baldwin is another," said he, turning to open a door behind him just opposite the foot of the ladder.

"Is that his laboratory?" Eleanor whispered, as he disappeared inside.

"Yes. I say, young man, do you call this hospitality to leave us kicking our heels in the entry?" cried the professor, as he pushed in after him. "Here is a lady very anxious, I know, to inspect your mysteries."

Eleanor, following, found herself in a room that seemed a sort of cross between an apothecary's shop and a smithy. A bench covered with tools and bits of metal was flanked by rows of jars, through which the moonlight pouring in by the windows disported itself in gruesomely green splendor that was almost uncanny. There were pestles and mortars and bottles of suspicious-looking liquids arranged on a shelf around an alembic, a pair of bellows, and other chemical apparatus; and, most interesting of all, a network of wires extended from the green jars referred to across the room and into a smaller apartment, which was evidently the young man's chamber. Eleanor looked around her with astonished eyes.

"And this is where you work?" she said.

"Where he works and where he sleeps," said her uncle. "In the words of the poet, slightly altered:

"'This couch contrives a double part to play—
A bed by night, a dynamo by day.'"

The professor as he spoke, nodded in the direction of the inner room, into which Mr. Struthers was in the act of retiring in quest of the banjo.

"Not strictly true, but sufficiently so for poetic license," said the young man, as he produced the instrument from under the lounge in question.

Eleanor, peering after him, had perceived that his bed-room presented in truth a curious combination of toilet articles and electrical appliances.

"I wish you would tell me what some of these things mean," she said, as she scrutinized interestedly the rows of green jars in which the liquid bubbled around bits of submerged metal.

"That is a battery," he said.

"Would you like a shock?" asked her uncle.

"Above all things."

Mr. Struthers accordingly laid down the banjo, and, after adjusting various wires and implements, approached her shyly, and said:

"If you will hold this piece of wire in one hand, and this in the other, I will let the current on. Do not be afraid; it will not hurt you."

These last words were in answer to the half-gleeful, half-deprecatory shiver with which she took hold of the two ends of the wire.

"Are you ready, Miss Baldwin?"

"Yes."

For a moment Eleanor returned the looks of smiling inquiry bent on her by the two men, with merry defiance, as much as to say that she felt nothing; then a little spasm of surprise danced across her face.

"Oh, how queer it feels!" she cried, an instant later.

"Shall I stop?" asked Mr. Struthers, solicitously.

"Oh, no; I rather like it. I—I—oh, how queer it is! Oh!—oh! I think that will do, Mr. Struthers. I—I can't let go! I—"

The cessation of the current, and the loosening of her grasp consequent upon it, cut short her words. Her uncle and Mr. Struthers were on the broad grin.

"It's the queerest feeling. It makes one feel as if small prickles were running through one. I'm very glad I tried it, though. Was it a big dose?"

"Oh, no. You could take more than that with a little practice and think nothing of it."

"But, if he had a mind to, he could commit murder at the expense of unsuspecting friends," said her uncle. "See here."

Adjusting the apparatus with the deftness of one skilled in such matters, the professor bade Eleanor regard the point where the two ends of the wire had been brought in contact. Then,

following a quick glance which he gave at Mr. Struthers, a white, sizzling flame leaped into being, which caused Eleanor to utter an exclamation of awe.

"How wonderful science is!" she murmured.

"Yes; but the full moon is still more wonderful, and we must not forget her. Come, my boy, pick up your banjo."

"Why, it smells as it does after a thunderstorm!" she exclaimed.

"It is the same element, tamed," Struthers answered, as he waited for Eleanor to follow her uncle out of the room.

The professor, after climbing the ladder, raised the trap-door and disappeared. A flood of moonlight greeted them.

"Shall I go first?" the young man asked.

"Oh, no; I can find my way. I am used to ladders, for I was brought up in the country. What a lovely night!" she added, as she stepped lightly from the last round over the sill of the trap-door.

CHAPTER VIII.

ALL THE MOON'S FAULT.

Eleanor found herself on a graveled tin roof with chimney-pots on every side, and a net-work of wires stretching like mammoth silver cob-webs hither and thither into sheeny space. Far off to the right and left a river glistened, whereon many lights moved and twinkled. High over head the moon rode in gorgeous tranquility, sole mistress of a heaven unflecked by a single cloud.

"You have your wish; you are in Roof Park, my lady. Will you take your choice of seats?" said Uncle Phineas, with mock solemnity, indicating a couple of comfortable-looking chairs and a hammock in front of them, which swung between two chimneys.

"The hammock for me, if no one else wants

it," she said. "This is perfection; so cool, too; you can feel the breeze from the sea. Why do not more people do this? At least it is no longer very hot," she added, observing the smile on both their faces. She stretched herself out and drew the netting close around her, so that only her face peeped forth.

"Swing me, Uncle Phin."

The professor removed from his mouth the pipe he was about to light, and smilingly complied; while Mr. Struthers, dropping into one of the chairs began to finger lightly the strings of the banjo.

"He will sing for you if you ask him," said the professor.

"I do ask. I am very fond of singing, Mr. Struthers."

For a moment the young man hesitated; then, after a preliminary thrum or two, he sang in a sweet, strong voice.

Silently swayed the hammock, save for a

moment's creak on the rusty hook, at the close of each oscillation.

The professor had been able to kindle his meerschaum, and stood happy, giving now and again with his hand a light impulse to the shrouded figure.

The singer's voice welled out in eloquent rapture, lingered a moment, and then lapsed into the quieter strain that comported with his ditty. There was pathos in his tone before the finish, and when he had come to an end, and the instrument was at rest, the hammock still swayed and the smoker still smoked, and only the creak and the far off rumble of the city streets broke the silence. After a moment he started off again, this time as though he were fearful that his song had been of a too sentimental order, with a light negro ditty, descriptive of the charms of Eliza Jane, which evoked a ripple of pleased laughter from the hammock, and spurred him to essay another of the same type, concerning a little "yellow girl." The professor, having set the

swing a-flying by a couple of stronger twists of his fore-arm, composed himself in the other chair, to watch the cat die, as he said, which melancholy event took place just as the melody was brought to a close. Thereupon Eleanor sat up, and, grasping the netting on either side, pushed against the roof with her feet, and set herself in motion again.

"Don't disturb yourself; you are to sing!" she cried to Struthers, who started up as though to take his turn at swinging her. "I am enjoying it so much."

He thought a little and began once more with one of Moore's short love songs, and a second, and still a third time he made a new choice before the humor seized him to desist or her to speak. Then they chanced to look up at the same moment and to perceive that the professor's head had fallen forward on his breast and that he was no longer smoking.

"He is asleep," said Eleanor, in a whisper. Then, as she watched the electrician lay the

banjo softly beside him, she added with enthusiasm: "It must be an endless delight to be able to sing like that."

"It is a relaxation to me from my work, at any rate. Your uncle seems to like to hear me, and none of the neighbors have complained as yet."

Eleanor, shrouded in the hammock, was able to peep at him through the network without being observed. The moonlight fell upon him in such a way that his features were thrown into relief. They were refined and suggested a sensitive temperament. She reflected that he must be between twenty-five and thirty. His appearance was neat, but he was evidently poor. What a strange contrast were these new surroundings to those which she had just left. What would her aunt say if she could see her now rocking in a hammock on a roof, while an impecunious student of science sang to her. Eleanor could not help smiling at the thought, but at the same moment she said to herself that "he was fifty-fold more interesting to her than

Owen Page and the other young men with whom she had associated during the past year." There was, moreover, something shy and unsophisticated about this one, which gave her a sense of composure which it was rather pleasant to feel.

"Have you lived here long, Mr. Struthers?" she asked.

"Only about six months in this house. But I was born and brought up in the city. Last summer I was graduated from the school of mines."

"So you have begun your life-work," she replied, wistfully.

"I am immensely interested in electricity. I am assisting a prominent chemist in making some experiments, and in my leisure—which is considerable—I am pursuing my studies and investigations on my own account. Sooner or later I hope to obtain a position either with some large concern that puts in electrical plants or regular employment as a consulting engineer in such matters."

He spoke with a direct simplicity that attracted

Eleanor. He seemed so modest and yet so self-reliant withal.

"Then we are somewhat similarly situated," she was tempted to reply; "only you have your work already in a measure provided and mapped out, and I am still an idler perforce."

"You?" he ejaculated, wonderingly.

She enjoyed his astonishment for a moment without responding, then she said:

"You did not know, then, that I was looking for a position."

He became confused, and it was plain that he was nonplussed, doubtful whether she was bantering him or no. Again she waited, finding his embarrassed silence and almost distressed mien delicious, by way of contrast to the veneered audacity of the young men who visited her aunt Emma.

"Yes, I am going to be a teacher; that is, if any one will engage me. I have come here to ask my uncle about it. He does not know as yet. I should like a position in a college if

possible, so that I might become a professor in time, if I were fit for it. But I am ready to begin at the bottom of the ladder, and accept anything that offers. Does the idea shock you, Mr. Struthers?"

She had had no intention of confiding her secret to him. Somehow it had slipped out, and here she was laying bare her inmost soul, as it were, to this half-starved-looking young engineer, whom she had never seen before to-day. Was it that she felt certain of his sympathy by instinct, in spite of the intimation of mistrust which her query conveyed?

"Shock me? Why should it?" he said, simply. "Only—" he added, and then precipitately halted, while renewed discomfiture betrayed itself on his cheeks.

"Only what, Mr. Struthers?" Eleanor asked, with a delighted laugh.

For a moment he hesitated, then suddenly raising his eyes, he answered:

"Only I had not supposed you to be that kind of a young lady."

"And what kind of a young lady had you supposed me to be, Mr. Struthers?"

He evidently realized that his boldness had merely drawn him on the thinner ice, for he seemed to undergo contortions before her interrogatory and laughing glance. She had raised herself in the hammock as she spoke, and was looking full at him. But it plainly was not his wont to rescue himself from peril by subterfuge, for after a moment of agonized confusion, he said, with the same directness as before:

"I assumed you were rich, and that it would not have occurred to you to do anything of that sort."

"In other words, you took me for a frivolous butterfly of fashion."

Eleanor was sorry the moment she had spoken, and realized the flippancy of her remark the more keenly as he answered in a tone that was

free from any suggestion that he was punishing his tormentor:

"It does not follow, does it, because one is rich, that one has to be a frivolous butterfly?"

There was a naive searching for truth in the interrogative form of his reply, and the sole evidence of intentional satire lay in the fact that he returned her gaze without flinching. Even the wounded worm will turn.

"I deserve the rebuke, Mr. Struthers. But I am neither rich nor a butterfly, I hope. Since I have said so much, I should enlighten you exactly as to the truth. I suppose you meant that because I have a more or less prosperous air, is was fair to assume that it was not necessary for me to earn my own living. Well, in one sense it is not. I have an uncle—another uncle—who is very rich, I believe, and who is willing to have me live with him as long as I like. He has been very kind to me. When my father died a year and a half ago, he—Uncle Harold—came out West and insisted that I and my brothers

should return to New York with him to his home; and there I have lived ever since. I came on my brothers' account. They were to be sent to school; and I told my uncle Harold then that it was my wish to be a teacher. The boys are well cared for now, so that I am at liberty to carry out my intention. The only trouble is—" Eleanor paused, realizing that it was rather ludicrous that she should unbosom her perplexities further, yet an inexplicable impulse unsealed her lips again, and she continued—"the only trouble is that they—or particularly my aunt—do not understand at all why I should wish to leave them. She and my uncle have both been exceedingly kind and generous to me; they have an exquisite house, where I have everything my heart could desire in the way of luxury, and nothing would please them more than that I should remain with them until —until I am married," she said, with a little laugh. "Aunt Emma is bent upon my marrying, and I'm afraid it will break her heart if I don't.

But a woman can't afford to throw away her whole future merely in order to be married. Why should a woman give up her life-work more than a man?" she added, eagerly. "Would a man—would you, Mr. Struthers?"

Struthers blushed. "I have never been in love," he said.

"For the matter of that, neither have I," she responded, gayly. "It is merely a supposititious case, so far as that goes. But does it not come to the same thing when Aunt Emma says that if I become a teacher I shall cut myself off from the possibility of ever making a brilliant match; for, of course, Mr. Struthers, I shall never put up with a match that is not brilliant."

The fall of the professor's pipe relieved the young electrician from the necessity of replying to this last observation, for, aroused by the noise, Uncle Phineas opened his eyes and sat upright.

"I verily believe I have been snoozing."

"I verily believe you have, Uncle Phin"

Eleanor answered; and she and Mr. Struthers laughed gleefully.

The professor looked at his watch.

"Twenty-five minutes to eleven!" he cried. "Here, you young people, this will never do. Roof Park closes at half-past ten sharp. And what is more, young man, you forgot our coffee."

"So I did, sir," stammered Struthers. "I apologize."

The professor shook his head incredulously.

"Again I verily believe that it was done on purpose, in order that I might fall asleep. The young against the old! History repeats itself night after night; and, worst of all, the moon, who used to have the reputation of being circumspect in such matters, winks half the time at what is going on, and leaves us in the dark the rest." He rose, and after a last survey of the brilliant heavens, led the way to the opening, "Come; it is time for bed."

"I shall petition the trustees of Roof Park

to-morrow that in future the gates remain open an hour later," said Struthers, quietly, as he offered his hand to Eleanor to assist her over the sill.

"But that will not help us to-night," she replied, with a sigh, looking up regretfully at the glorious moon. "A woman never thinks of to-morrow."

"That is the reason why so many of you make mistakes; take an old bachelor's word for it!" cried the professor. "The gates are closed," he added, as the trap-door fell into place, and they began to descend the step-ladder.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HEART OF A WOMAN.

A fortnight had slipped away before Eleanor realized that time was passing. The days were very much alike. Each morning, after breakfast, while the professor worked at his desk, she applied herself to repairing his wardrobe. There was plenty to do ; when the heap of socks was exhausted, there was all his under-clothing to be gone over. Buttons were conspicuously absent, and gaping rents implored the intervention of the darning-needle ; the bosoms and the cuffs and the collars of his shirts were on the eve of degeneration, for lack of a supervising feminine eye. She was busy as a bee until the arrival of Adolph with his tray, at noon, which was a signal for the unloosening of tongues, and

thereafter Uncle Phineas was at her beck and call for the rest of the day.

What delightful afternoons they passed together! When the picture-stores and book-stores were no longer new, they visited the markets and the hospitals and the school-houses and the public institutions—places where Eleanor had never been and which she had longed to see. And while they peregrinated thus, she never wearied of her uncle's discourse. He had sojourned in many strange places and seen many strange things in the course of the quarter of a century he had devoted to studying the earth's formation, and he had facts and anecdotes at his fingers' ends.

So matters went until dinner time; then Mr. Struthers descended from his attic, and they all set out to dine together at some restaurant, and twice the electrician was lured from his work in the early afternoon and carried off to one of the popular resorts beside the sea. But Roof Park was not neglected. Almost every evening the

moon found them there drinking the coffee prepared by Mr. Struthers in his laboratory; and notwithstanding this beverage it invariably happened that Uncle Phineas fell asleep before the singing was at an end.

Over and over again Eleanor was on the point of broaching to her uncle the question of her future, but somehow the words lingered on her lips. Her enjoyment of the present made her prone to procrastination, and then, too, while she was sure of his sympathy she could not feel confident that he would aid and abet her to the extent she desired. Would he agree to her leaving her uncle Harold's house and striking out for herself? Was it not probable that, like her aunt Emma, he would suggest that she paint on china or give lessons in whist in order to satisfy her yearnings to be usefully employed? The more she pondered the matter the greater was her doubt as to what view he would take, and yet her desire for a definite occupation was growing daily. The example of her uncle and

of Mr. Struthers, reveling in their devotion to congenial tasks, whetted her ardor and made her feel herself to be a drone in this hive of workers.

On several occasions, while she and the professor were sitting together, his face had assumed the peculiar constrained expression observable when he was ill at ease, and he, too, had seemed on the point of speaking of something on his mind. Ever since his shrinking from her proffered confidence, he had, unknown to Eleanor, been a victim of remorse and had been trying to screw up his courage so far as to request her to make a statement of her perplexities. He censured himself as a brute, and yet he found it extremely difficult to say what was necessary. Thus it happened that there were occasional lapses in their conversation, when each sat tongue-tied in the presence of the other, yet wholly unaware of the other's uneasiness.

Remorse proved in the end the more potent factor, and Uncle Phineas was the first to speak. It was just after luncheon, when he had fortified

his flagging resolution with beer and sandwiches. "My dear," he began, and then halted.

As this was not his ordinary phrase in addressing her, Eleanor looked at him inquiringly, realizing that what he had to say must be out of the common run.

"My dear—" he resumed, "I am afraid you got an impression the other day—the day you arrived, you remember—from my manner when you spoke to me of wishing to ask my advice as to some matter—that I was—eh—not exactly encouraging. You see, I felt some natural diffidence, as I told you at the time, in meddling with affairs of the heart, which are rather outside the experience of an old bachelor like me." He paused, and laughed nervously, then, as though he were determined, now that the plunge was taken, to face the situation squarely, he said, with an earnest air: "But, my dear, if I can really be of service to you in helping you reach a decision about any matter, you must speak and let me know what it is, and not mind my bear-

ishness, for you are the apple of my eye, as you ought to know, and I am more anxious that you should be happy, and make a success of life, than I am for anything else in the world. Come," he added, more blithely, gaining ease through his own sincerity, "make a clean breast of it. Let me know the facts in the case, and I will do the best I can to solve your difficulties."

Eleanor, who had listened to him at first perplexedly, was regarding him now with blushing merriment.

"There *is* a matter I wish to speak to you about, Uncle Phin, but it isn't in the least of the kind you evidently suppose. I rather think that I quite agree with what you said the other day, that in love affairs a woman had better make up her own mind without asking anybodys' advice —even advice as sensible as yours would surely be; and you must once and for all get the idea out of your head—I can't imagine how it ever got there—that I am in love or engaged, or thinking about being engaged, or, in fact, that

the notion of marriage is anywhere lurking in my brain. Now, if you will promise me this, and say that you believe me on your word of honor, I'll tell you what I really wish to have your advice about. You believe me, don't you, Uncle Phin?"

"Of course, if you say so, Peach-blossom; you ought to be the best judge," he answered, with an equivocal air, as he struck a match to light his meerschaum.

Eleanor leaned forward and blew out the flame, and snatched up the match-box from the table.

"You are a perverse, obstinate man," she cried. "Now you shall not have a single whiff until you tell me you are convinced I am speaking the truth." She sat down on the arm of his easy chair, and bending over, looked into his eyes. "What have I said or done to make you imagine anything so absurd?"

"Why absurd?" he asked, restored to equanimity.

HE PUFFED GRATEFULLY ONCE OR TWICE. *Page* 157.

"Of course it would be absurd. I don't intend to think of marriage for five years—if ever."

"'Methinks the woman doth protest too much.'"

"Now, uncle Phin, you are only teasing me. You said just now that you were anxious for me to be happy and to make a success of life; that's what I'm anxious to consult you about; I wish to make a success of my life. Otherwise I shall not be happy."

He looked up at her.

"Eh? Not happy? What has made my Peach-blossom unhappy?"

"I didn't say I was unhappy now. What I meant was that if I were to go on living as I am, I'm sure I should become unhappy."

"Then don't."

Eleanor opened the match-box and striking a light applied it to the pipe which the professor held in his mouth. He puffed gratefully—once—twice—thrice.

"I'm not good at guessing riddles," he said,

laying back his head and meeting her reflective gaze.

"I was thinking how I should put the matter to you, uncle. You remember that father while he lived used to superintend my studies, and that he encouraged me to follow the college course. I don't pretend that I knew a great deal when he died, but I think that I had reached the point where I was beginning to realize what I didn't know in certain directions."

"Precisely," he said with a nod, as she paused to stifle a cough induced by the tobacco smoke.

"Now what I wish to ask, dear Uncle Phin, is, first, whether you suppose there would be any chance of my being able to get a position at some seminary or academy as an instructor in one of the English branches—either literature or history, or I think that after a little more study I should be fitted to teach in Latin; and, second, assuming that I could, whether there would be any objection—or you would have any objection to my taking it?"

The professor stirred in his chair and drew eagerly at his pipe. His eyes were full of light. For some moments he made no reply, while Eleanor rose and seated herself quietly on the sofa at the other side of the table.

"What put that idea into your head?" he asked.

"I have always had it; that is, I have always been fond of books and reading and study, and after father's death I had made up my mind to try to get some pupils when Uncle Harold arrived, and persuaded me to come East. I gave up my plan because I wished the boys to be well cared for, but I've been sorry ever since; not sorry that I came, because I can see how much good it has done me in a variety of ways, but sorry that I've had to give up all my interests of that sort. Perhaps you won't understand what I mean, Uncle Phin, and may think me silly and ungrateful, but I feel at present that I am drifting along without aim or object, and I wish to make a change."

"H'm! Have you spoken to your uncle and aunt Stagg?"

"I have mentioned the plan to Aunt Emma; she was horrified."

"Precisely," murmured the professor, and his eyes gleamed again. "Precisely." He puffed away at his mahogany-colored meerschaum, so that the smoke rose from his mouth in a sable cloud.

"What do you think of it?" she asked, presently.

"I am not prepared at the moment to say that your aunt was not right," he replied dryly.

"What are the objections to my plan, Uncle Phin?"

"Did not your aunt mention them?"

"Oh, Aunt Emma could see no sense in it at all. She said I was crazy, and that anything of the kind was not to be thought of. I wasn't altogether surprised that she should take that view, but I had hopes, Uncle Phin, that you—" She did not finish the sentence, which was spoken

with mournful dispassionateness. Then she added: "She said that I would be ruining my prospects."

"Well, wouldn't you?"

"Prospects of what?"

The professor puffed meditatively His face was turned from Eleanor so that she could not see his smile.

"I imagine that your aunt had reference among other things to marriage," he remarked in the same dry tone.

"Yes! She referred to that."

"In which she showed herself a woman of the discretion for which I have given her credit. The chances of your making a brilliant match would certainly be seriously diminished if not utterly destroyed were you to forsake your present home for a position such as you have in mind."

"I have said, uncle, that I had no thought of marriage," Eleanor said, in a suppressed voice.

"Not for five years, I believe you said. At

the end of that period, or, with due deference to your knowledge of self, even before the end of that period, you might think differently. What then?"

"'What then?' Surely, uncle, it is not reasonable that I should have to pass some of the best years of life in idleness and amusement in order to keep myself before the eyes of young men who are on the look-out for wives." She spoke with quiet bitterness; then, after a pause, she exclaimed intensely: "I do not think a woman ought to consider marriage in such a connection. If men seek her out, and she loves one and is willing to forsake her work in order to be his helpmate, well and good; but she should make them seek her out and should follow out her own wishes and tastes just as if men did not exist, instead of sacrificing everything else in order to flaunt herself perpetually before them, as much as to say: 'I am of marriageable age and ready to be married. What do you think of me?' Moreover, uncle, it cannot be that if I were to

become a teacher I should not meet young men who might sympathize with me and win my love even. I might not make a brilliant match in the sense that he was wealthy or of social consideration, but I believe that he would be a gentleman and full of noble instincts and worthy ambitions, and that he would make me love him in spite of myself."

"There is something in what you say," answered the professor; "but apart from the question of marriage, Eleanor, there is that of quitting a comfortable home and all the comforts and luxuries that belong to a life of elegant leisure such as you enjoy and would continue to enjoy in your uncle Harold's house. In a position of the kind that you aspire to fill, you would find your circumstances very different; your pay would be small, barely adequate to supply you with sufficient food and very insignificant wearing apparel; your hours of work would be confining, and but little time would be at your

own disposal, unless snatched from sleep. Have you taken all that into account?"

There was a judicial calmness in the professor's tone, but one watching his face could have seen that he was awaiting the answer with interest, and that for a moment his lips clasped the stem of his pipe without suction.

"That does not alarm me in the least," she answered. "You remember, Uncle Phin, that I was brought up in the simplest way. I am accustomed to economize and to go without things. Besides, what pleasure there would be in feeling that I was supporting myself and that the food I ate and the clothes on my back were mine by right of my own endeavors, instead of contributed by others, however kind."

"But you might earn money—enough to clothe yourself, for instance—by embroidery or some other ladylike art, without leaving your uncle's house."

The professor, as he spoke, by a series of

determined puffs, sent a volume of new smoke toward the ceiling.

"Aunt Emma mentioned that. She suggested that I might paint on china or give whist lessons, and yet retain my prospects."

"Ah! did she, really? Just my own idea precisely; only she improves upon it. Paint on china or give whist lessons! Capital! But the last strikes me as especially felicitous. You could give whist lessons, I should say, certainly, without sacrificing your prospects. Your aunt is an eminently sensible woman."

The professor spoke jauntily; so much so that Eleanor, who had intended to be sardonic, paused with surprise. It almost seemed to her that there was irony, also, in her mentor's words. But the sober precision of the phrase with which he renewed the dialogue, convinced her of her error.

"Why should you not adopt your aunt's suggestion?"

"Can't you see why, Uncle Phin? I should

merely be making believe. It couldn't help being nearly the same as it is now. Oh, Uncle Phin, I don't wish to seem to you ungrateful for what Uncle Harold and Aunt Emma have done for me. They have been very, very kind, and—and I don't wish to criticise them; I'm not criticising them. But what is beneficial for one person and what interests one person may be harmful and demoralizing to another. What you say about the privations of a teacher's life seems nothing to me compared with the pain of going on from day to day feeling that I am accomplishing nothing and doing nothing, except what the hour happens to bring in the way of so-called amusement that is often wearisome in the extreme, when I might be trying to be of use to somebody, and developing whatever talents I may have at the same time. It's the atmosphere that I object to—the whole way of looking at things; and I had a feeling that you would understand me, Uncle Phin."

There was the sadness of despair in her tone.

"Understand you, my little girl? I should think I did understand you. Has not my whole life been a protest against the very atmosphere which you condemn, and which, thank God, you cannot bear?"

The professor seemed almost to be soliloquizing. His face was still turned away, and Eleanor could not perceive the excitement in his large eyes. For a moment or two he smoked fiercely—triumphantly, as it were; then laid his pipe upon the table, and wheeling around his chair, held out his arms to her.

"Come here and kiss me!"

She approached him in sweet surprise, and lowered her lips to his cheek. He held her upon his knee and stroked her hair.

"You shall teach; you shall do what you wish," he said. "I will see to it; leave it all to me."

"Then you do not think me foolish, Uncle Phin?"

"Foolish? I thank God that you are so wise;

that it has been given you to see the difference between the false gods and the true, the glory of life and its prostitution—yes, prostitution, I say. I had not dared hope it, for they had held to your lips the Lethe of luxury and languor and form and superstition; but you would not drink; no, thank God, you would not drink! And well for you, darling, for in that draught, so smooth, so sweet, so intoxicating, lies death to the love of truth, death to the thirst for knowledge, death to the love of striving, death to the love of sacrifice, death to the soul. You have made your choice; but, child, the path which you have chosen is no easy one to follow," he cried, with sudden sternness. "You have said that work and privations have no terrors for you; you may even be proof against despondency and weariness of heart and brain; but are you ready to put up with polite scorn, kindly consideration and pitying patronage? Are you prepared to be looked askance at as quixotic, stigmatized as unconventional, tabooed as unorthodox? This must those who

pursue knowledge and truth for their own sakes be prepared to endure. They must look neither to the right nor to the left; they must be ready to strive from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, content in the single consciousness that they are helping to unravel the mysteries of God's treasure-house and search out the secrets of the infinite."

She turned her eyes to meet his.

"I am not afraid, Uncle Phin," she said with a bright smile. "If only I am worthy."

"It is a matter of spirit, not of deeds," he answered. He took her hand in his and patted it softly, while he seemed to be looking into distance, as he said: "I will tell you a secret, Peach-blossom. For the soul that loves truth and seeks it unflinchingly, unsparingly, devotedly, unwearyingly, the stars and the seas and the flowers and the woods and the tempests and the sunsets and the beasts of the field and the glorious works of man and man himself—man, the mightiest mystery of all—have a charm, a

beauty unknown to those who fold their hands and smile the smile which says: 'Is not truth found? Would we be wiser than our fathers?' They may politely mock at us, but they cannot hurt us. They may pity us even as we pity them; they may talk of what we know as if they knew it, and we be forced to listen and make no sign; but they cannot rob us of Heaven's usufruct, the wage of honest workers who juggle neither with themselves nor God—knowledge, the light of the soul."

"I am so glad to hear you talk so; it gives me courage and hope. Not that I have doubted my mind, uncle, but it was not easy to battle single-handed against the strong opinions of others older and with far more experience than I. And when I thought you were going to desert me too, I indeed felt my heart sink within me. But now I am so happy; the future seems so clear to me. Even if one fail, even if one's efforts to find out what is best and do it, prove fruitless, one could still—" She paused without finish-

ing; then clasping her hands with an excess of earnestness, exclaimed: "Ah! but it must be terrible to fail, to feel that one has failed; yet so many must and do. If one has doubts as to what one can do, the only way must be to put them aside, refuse to give them breast room. Yet I do not mean to fail, Uncle Phin," she said firmly, with her same bright smile.

"The pride of glorious youth," answered the professor, stroking her hair again. "Who is it that does not fail? Who is it that is ever satisfied? What true artist yet portrayed in his masterpiece one tithe of the golden visions of his brain? No, the vision success is sweet; its glamour is the spur of youth, but the consolation of age is the fire undimmed amid the ashes of failure. You must prepare to fail, to see, before you die, the truths you thought were truths supplanted by others; so the world advances. But you are young and will not have it so, and I, alas! am growing old. And so you wish to be one of us, Peach-blossom! You shall be; I will

write to-morrow. I have in mind a vacancy that I know you can fill, and I think I shall be in time to get it for you."

"Oh, Uncle Phin, how happy I am!"

She kissed and thanked him; just then there was a knock, and William Struthers stood in the doorway.

"Miss Baldwin, I have come to ask a favor," he said, timidly. "It is lovely outdoors, and I have stolen an afternoon from my work. Will you walk with me in the Park?"

"That would be pleasant to do. And, Uncle Phin, will you go, too?"

"Not to-day, Peach-blossom, not to-day. I—yes, I have an errand in another direction."

The professor looked confused, then seemed to swallow smoke, and coughed to hide his embarrassment.

"But, we could go your way. Could we not, Mr. Struthers?"

"We could," answered the electrician, briefly.

"No, no, Peach-blossom, I insist on having a

day off, myself. You have been here more than a week and monopolized me completely. Am I to have no breathing time, no moments I can call my own?" he cried, with assumed bluster. "Too much of this tyranny, and I shall strike."

They laughed gayly.

"I will go with you, Mr. Struthers, if only to punish him. Mark my words, he will be disconsolate until our return."

"Well, even if so, I must be habituating myself to the idea of losing her, if not in one way in another," he added, significantly. "Am I not wise in preparing myself, Struthers?"

"Eminently so, sir."

The young man's happy face grew crimson as he held wide the door for Eleanor to pass.

CHAPTER X.

THE BOTTOM OF PANDORA'S BOX.

Eleanor looked radiant and there was a becoming blush on her cheeks, as she turned to nod farewell over her shoulder.

Struthers had closed the front door, and they were descending the steps, as a stylish dog-cart, drawn by a magnificent-looking pair of bays, clattered slowly up the street. The flush on Eleanor's cheeks became a deep red. With a glance, she had realized that the young man who held the reins was Owen Page. He was looking inquiringly at the numbers, and now, as he drew up before the house, he recognized her and sprang down from the box.

"I hope I am in time to catch you," he said, as they shook hands. "Will you do me the

"I HOPE I AM IN TIME TO CATCH YOU," HE SAID. *Page* 174.

honor of driving with me? I had come to ask you."

For an instant, Eleanor hesitated; then she said:

"I am very sorry, Mr. Page, but I have promised to walk with Mr. Struthers this afternoon. We were just starting, in fact, as you drove up."

The two men exchanged looks, and there was an awkward pause, which was broken by her adding:

"Mr. Struthers, this is Mr. Page, a friend of my aunt's and mine."

They bowed.

"I regret exceedingly that I should be so unlucky," said Owen Page, with evident chagrin. "I shall hope to be more fortunate another time."

"I beg that you will not allow me to interfere with your pleasure, Miss Baldwin. We can walk another day," exclaimed Struthers, in a tone that was gentle, but almost sad.

Eleanor looked from one to the other, and, uncomfortable as the situation was, could not

help being struck by the contrast in their appearance. Owen Page wore a perfectly fitting, dark-drab coat, adorned by a big button-hole bouquet The standing-collar that encased his neck, his closely cropped whiskers, and short, pointed, auburn beard and his tan-colored driving-gloves were equally trig, and in keeping with his well-appointed equipage, the horses of which were now held by an irreproachable groom. Beside him, Mr. Struthers, in nondescript pepper-and-salt, looked commonplace and sober.

Again she seemed to hesitate.

"I cannot go with you both," she said, with a smile, "and I think that an engagement is an engagement. Mr. Page, I must ask you to excuse me for this afternoon."

A moment later, Owen Page had mounted to his seat, and raising his hat rather gravely, he drove his pair down the street. Glancing at Struthers, Eleanor observed that he was standing gazing after him with an absorbed air that seemed far from happy.

"Are you ready?" she asked, gayly, opening her parasol.

She was conscious, somehow, of elation.

"Why did you not go with him?" he asked quietly.

"Did you wish me to go with him?"

"I did not wish you to feel bound to go with me."

"You will have to put up with me now," she said, with a smile.

"I am afraid you think I am ungrateful." Then he said with marked directness: "It would have been a grievous disappointment to me."

She made a little curtsey.

"Who is that gentleman, Miss Baldwin?"

"Mr. Owen Page." Then she added: "I have seen him quite frequently at my aunt's and elsewhere. He is very rich, I believe, and he owns a yacht and a great many horses, and—er—is much interested in farming."

"Oh!"

The melancholy in Struthers' tone struck Eleanor. In her reply she had spoken half ironically, without exactly meaning to do so. It had suited her mood, which had become buoyant. And now her companion's mournful ejaculation seemed to her very funny. Why should he be mournful? What was Owen Page to him or he to Owen Page? If she had forsaken him for Mr. Page, there might have been ground for gloom, but here he was walking with her as he desired, and yet his humor had changed in a moment from cheerfulness to dejection. What was the reason?

As she asked herself the question, she cast a side-glance at the electrician. He was striding along at a pace which suited her own elastic temper, with his cane grasped by both hands behind his back, and a very grave expression of countenance that was closely akin to sadness. She was conscious herself of being in the best of spirits. What a lovely day it was, and how agreeable the air with its bracing suggestion of

autumn! She felt like flying, or, since that was denied her, like talking volubly.

"Oh, Mr. Struthers! Uncle Phin. approves entirely; and he thinks that he knows of a position. In another month I hope to be hard at work. We had just finished talking about it when you came in."

At her words, Struthers seemed to start as one awakened from a maze.

"I congratulate you," he said.

"But you do not approve?"

"On the contrary, I do, heartily."

"There was so little enthusiasm in your tone that I was doubtful."

"Can you expect me to be enthusiastic that you are going away?"

"That was very prettily said, Mr. Struthers."

"Prettily said? I am not a man to make pretty speeches, Miss Baldwin. I am very much in earnest. I—" He stopped short in his eager delivery, and, after an instant, added softly: "Excuse me. I have no right to bore you with my own emotions."

"Bore me? You could not do that, I think," Eleanor answered, awed by his serious tones into soberness on her own part.

For some minutes they walked in silence, traversing the stretch of sidewalk that lay between them and the Park. When close to it, he suddenly turned and said·

"There is something I wish you to hear, Miss Baldwin. I will wait until we are where we can talk freely."

Whereupon he led the way into the Park and along the main avenue. At the first opportunity he branched off into a side path, with which he appeared to be familiar. When they were sheltered from probability of interruption, he slackened his pace, and said, pointing to a bench:

"Shall we sit here?"

Eleanor seated herself. She had divined from his manner what was brewing, and she would fain have prevented him from speaking; but it was obvious that he was determined to have his say. He was standing before her with his hands

still clasped behind his back. His face reflected grave resolution, his eyes were bright with the stress of excitement. Still the voice in which he now began was composed, though clear:

"A fortnight ago, Miss Baldwin, I did not know of your existence; to-day there is no one in the world toward whom I feel as I feel toward you. I am a young man just starting in life, poor and struggling, without influence, and dependent solely on my own endeavors in order to make my way. I am well aware that a woman such as you can afford to be indifferent to the love of a man like me. I remember well that on the first evening of our acquaintance—an evening every moment of which is precious in my memory—you said that you would make none but a brilliant match. Moreover, what have I to offer you except poverty? Even if you would, we could not venture to be married, for I have not the means with which to support you. You see I recognize the hopelessness of the situation. And yet I am bold or fatuous

enough, whichever you may call it, to tell you of my love; to tell you what a blissful influence your presence and society have been to me during these two short weeks. I told you on that same first evening that I had never been in love. I know now both its rapture and its anguish. I know, too, how the gall of jealousy can in an instant blot happiness from the heart and bleach the glory from the sunshine. You are going away—far away, very likely, and in another fortnight I can scarcely hope to be remembered. Well, you have my secret—one which I did not intend to part with; and the worst of it is, the telling of it cannot avail me, as I well understand."

As Struthers finished he seated himself on the bench beside Eleanor and covered his face with his hands.

For a few moments she was silent, then she said:

"You may be sure of one thing, Mr. Struthers; I shall not easily forget you. This fortnight has been a very pleasant one to me, and largely

so because of your presence. I am very, very sorry that you feel as you do, and that I cannot help you. I am your friend, but it is not love that I feel for you."

"I had no idea that you loved me. No; I have merely opened my heart to you because I could not help it. Still I shall never give up hoping against hope," he added, lifting his tear-dimmed eyes to hers. "You spoke once of your life-work and asked if I would ever give up mine for the sake of a woman. My life-work for the future is to win your love. Only tell me truly before I cease to trouble you," he went on, "that there is no one else whom you love. There was something in the look of that man who came to take you to drive with him that forced the iron into my soul and made me feel that I had in him a rival. Does he love you, too? You cannot deny it, I see."

"I do not love Mr. Page. I shall never marry him, even if he asks me."

"Thank you for that. And now all that

remains for me is to make the most of myself; to win a name and fortune and success, in order to render myself in some measure worthy to be your husband. I shall hope—you cannot prevent me from that; and the day may come when I shall dare to speak to you again of my love, which time will only make stronger and deeper. I see you shake your head. That will not deter me. I have faith that the hour will arrive when I shall be able to offer you a lot as brilliant as any from which your aunt says that you have cut yourself off by your decision to join the ranks of the world's workers. Some day I shall win you from yourself."

Again Eleanor shook her head sadly.

"It is true," she said, "that I cannot prevent you from hoping against hope, but I warn you that it is at your peril. Poor Aunt Emma! She has done her best to win me from myself. Why should you hope," she asked, with a sweet smile, "to succeed when she has failed?"

CHAPTER XI.

EMMA JOURNEYS TO THE OUTER BARBARIANS.

Five years had slipped away. One autumn afternoon, not long after her return from the sea side, Mrs. Stagg was sitting in her drawing-room beside the low table, from which she had dispensed tea to five o'clock visitors. There had been several of these, but the last had just gone, and it was late to expect more. She had taken advantage of being alone to fill a cup for herself, from which she was sipping meditatively. Time had been forbearing toward her; she was still a young-looking woman, inclining rather toward thinness than embonpoint, and only the close observer would take note of the crows'-feet and wrinkles which had begun to mar the

bloom of her physiognomy. She was complacently conscious that few women with a daughter nearly old enough to enter society, could boast of so good a figure and such a generally youthful effect.

But her present reflections concerned neither her appearance nor her daughter. As she set down the empty cup she gave a long sigh, as a sort of outlet for her feelings, and glanced at the clock. While she was saying to herself that it was late for her husband, he entered the room.

"Ah, Cherub! I am behind time. Is the tea cold?"

"I have only this instant finished mine."

When he was comfortably established with a smoking cup, Emma said:

"Who do you suppose has been here?"

Like most men, Harold had no taste for guessing. He merely stirred his tea and waited.

"Owen Page," she continued. "They got back a week ago. He is looking wonderfully well—not a day older—and he says that his wife

has entirely recovered from the effects of the Roman fever."

"How long have they been abroad?"

"Three years. They sailed a fortnight after they were married, you remember, and have been there ever since. He says that, with the exception of his wife's illness, everything has run as smoothly as possible and that they could not have had a pleasanter experience. Whenever I think, Harold, that it might have been Eleanor, instead of her, I declare that I feel like screaming."

Harold Stagg, whose movements mentally, as well as physically, were slightly more deliberate, as the result of a few inches of extra girth, stirred what was left of his tea and drained it; then, as he handed back the cup replied:

"You might scream yourself black in the face, and you couldn't help it now."

Emma shook her head despondently.

"You never did understand, Harold."

"Understand what?"

"My feelings on that matter. You never truly sympathized."

"What matter?"

"Eleanor's refusal to accept Owen Page. It was madness—sheer, sheer madness—as I have said fifty times before."

"You have, my dear. What is the use of reviving it for the fifty-first? As to my lack of sympathy, that is a new charge. Did I not represent to Eleanor in the most solemn language that 'such an opportunity may not occur again?'"

"*May* not! It could not! I do not believe there ever was a girl who had so good a chance, and who threw it away so idiotically. I remember what you said perfectly well. You let her see, though, that you were not going to interfere."

"I couldn't compel her to marry him if she didn't choose to."

"No; but you could have put your foot down and declared that she should not leave us. I was willing to trust to time. If she had not been allowed to go to that fearful college, I am confi-

dent that she would have married Owen Page within a year. Well, as you say, I am a fool to bother my head about her. I washed my hands of her five years ago."

"Oh, no, you didn't, Cherub. You pretended to, but you couldn't. You will always have a soft spot in your heart for her."

"I did my duty by her if ever woman did," Emma answered, with non-committal sternness. Then, with quick perception, she added: "Is that letter from her?"

Harold had taken out a letter from his pocket while she was speaking.

"Yes," he said. "She wishes me to pay her a visit."

"Where?"

"At her college."

"What do you mean?"

"Read for yourself." He tossed her the letter. "She says that there is something she wishes to consult me about; that it is impossible for her to get away at the moment, and that as I have

spoken once or twice about paying her a visit, she hopes that I may be able to manage it now."

Emma perused the letter.

"I wonder what she wants," she exclaimed, when she had finished it.

"It was perfectly possible for her to tell us on paper, if she had wished us to know in advance."

Emma glared at him haughtily.

"She never asked our advice so long as that—venerable fossil was alive. I have always considered that he was largely responsible for the kink that got into Eleanor's brain. Poor old man! Those eyes of his haunt me still."

"He is dead; let him rest in peace. He adored Eleanor, and she adored him."

"I was very fond of him myself, Harold. He was a dear old soul; but you must admit that he was quixotic, and that he had large eyes. Well, I forgive him," she added, noticing that her husband looked grave. "I am sure that he meant well. What answer are you going to send?"

"I think I shall go."

"Really?"

"Why don't we both go? You have never been West, and it is time that you saw something of your own country. Illinois is not very far off, and after we have visited Eleanor, we can pass a few days at Chicago and Cincinnati and St. Louis. I can get away for three weeks as well as not."

Emma tapped her foot contemplatively.

"I suppose I could go. It is certainly quite an idea."

"And you would be able in that case, to satisfy your curiosity all the sooner."

"'Curiosity?' I assure you that mine in regard to Eleanor is of the mildest order. I am curious merely as one is curious in regard to what any crazy creature will do next. But, as you say, Harold, it is just as well that I should see how dreadful the West really is. Of course, if the child actually needs you, I suppose you are bound to go to her, in case you can leave

your business; though I think it is rather cool of her to ask your advice, considering that she acted directly contrary to all that you have ever given her. But if you go, I shall certainly go with you."

The upshot was that a week later they set out for Clavering College, the Illinois institution of learning with which Eleanor had been connected for the past five years. During those years Emma had seen but little of her recalcitrant niece, who, so to speak, had taken the bit in her teeth on her return from her uncle Phineas Baldwin's house with the offer of a tutorship from the seminary in question in her pocket. An earnest scene had followed, or, rather, two scenes; one in which she had brought to bear upon the culprit every argument in her arsenal; and a second and final one between the culprit and Harold, whose fabricated sternness Mrs. Stagg had hoped to keep unmitigated, by giving him to understand that she would be an unseen listener. But she had heard in vain. Harold

had begun well enough with a big-mouthed: "What is this cracked-brain scheme of leaving us that your aunt tells me of, Eleanor?" But from there on he had gradually weakened, until in place of putting his foot down once for all, he had suffered himself to be argued into admitting that if her heart was set on teaching, there was no especial obligation why she should continue to live with them; and as to the marriage which was proposed for her, that he was not prepared to advise her to marry a man she did not love.

Since her departure, the years had glided away without leaving much account of themselves, so far as concerned Emma's relations with her. When the disappointment of seeing all her efforts set at naught had lost its edge for Emma, she had accepted the situation, as one learns to accept the inevitable, and had even felt grateful that, inasmuch as Eleanor had insisted on being peculiar, she had selected a field for her eccentricities where she would never be heard of by the class of people who had expected from her better

things. They had been brought into personal contact but twice, and then only for a short period on each occasion, when Eleanor had come East in vacation-time. The first summer the Staggs had been abroad; so that it had been a good two years before they had met at all, and then it was for a fortnight at Beverly, during which Mrs. Stagg had been excessively polite to her guest, except so far as informing her that she looked thin and needed fattening-up could be considered as antagonistic. Her eagle eye had watched haughtily to detect the signs of barrier-breaking which she felt sure must sooner or later manifest themselves as the result of association with a mixed college; but she had been forced to admit, after Eleanor had departed, that they had not been forthcoming. In the summer following, Eleanor was to have paid them a second visit, in the glory (or, as Mrs. Stagg might have put it, the shame) of her advancement to the rank of assistant-professor; but the plan had been upset by the serious illness of

Uncle Phineas, at whose bedside Eleanor had officiated as a tender nurse until his death, which occurred just before it was time for her to return to her collegiate duties. Emma, who had felt herself excused from the necessity of attending the funeral by the distance of Beverly from New York, had cautioned Harold to be sure to bring Eleanor back with him for rest and a change; but she had represented to him that it was imperative for her to be on hand at the opening of the term. During the fourth summer—the one just past—Eleanor had not been able to come East, owing to the fact that she had been selected to supervise the building of a new reading-room for the students of "Clavering," which was in process of erection. Instead, her two brothers, who were nearly ready to graduate from school, had gone out to pay her a visit, whence they had returned with glowing accounts as to the attractions of the West, to which Emma had listened with patient scorn.

Still she felt, as she settled herself in the train

a few days later, that she was glad, on the whole, to be going, in order to see for herself the fabulous cities whose mushroom growth out of the bosom of the prairies had taken place almost within the scope of her own recollection. It was a languid interest at best, but she was ready to submit to be disgusted in order to behold the real truth, and possibly at the same time to be a little amused. Concerning Eleanor's individual surroundings she felt but little curiosity. She believed that she could divine in advance pretty well what they would be, and any attempt to do so made her shudder.

While she was studying the landscape through the windows of the Pullman, lost in these reflections, on the morning of their departure, Harold suddenly turned to her with the exclamation:

"That explains everything."

She took from him the newspaper he held out, and read at the place where his finger indicated, the following telegraphic announcement:

"The trustees of Clavering College, Illinois, at a special meeting held yesterday, elected Miss Eleanor Baldwin as president of that institution in place of David B. Albion, resigned. Miss Baldwin, the newly elected lady president, and late assistant professor of history and literature at the college, is in her twenty-fifth year, and is said to be very attractive in her personal appearance, and a favorite with the students both male and female. Her election gives general satisfaction."

"What do you think of *that?*" exclaimed Harold, with manifest enthusiasm, when he saw that his wife had finished.

"What does it all mean?" she asked, with a somewhat dazed air.

"Why, she has been chosen president of the college."

"How can she be president?"

"How can she be? Why shouldn't she be? She isn't the first woman who has been put at

the head of an educational institution. It's a great compliment to her, and—and does great credit to her ability and her pluck. President! Well, that is a ten-strike!"

"Harold, I think it's awful."

"Why is it awful?"

"In the first place, to be known as a lady president is enough to make one ill. Salesladies and lady type-writers are terrible enough, but this caps the climax."

"Come, now, Cherub, be reasonable. You are dodging the question. You must admit that they have paid her a great compliment."

Emma drew her cloak about her frigidly, as she replied:

"I suppose she has got what she wanted, if you mean that."

"Not one girl in a thousand would have done so well."

"Not one girl in ten thousand would have wished to."

"I am sorry for your sex, then," he retorted

warmly. "I mean to telegraph my congratulations at the next station."

Emma made no reply, and resting her cheek on her gloved hand, turned to the landscape again. But the suddenness with which she reverted her head a few moments later betrayed the warmth of her emotions, though she spoke with measured sentences:

"Of course, Harold, I understand and recognize that it is a great compliment, in one sense of the word, to have been chosen president, or whatever it is, of this college; and I will say frankly that it is a surprise to me that Eleanor should have been selected to fill such a position. She must have more ability of a certain kind than I gave her credit for, and I am ready to admit that she is entitled to be congratulated. But if, at the same time, you expect me to say that I think she is more to be congratulated because she is to spend her days as the lady president of a mixed college than she would be if she had married Owen Page, I beg to be

allowed to differ from you. What will her life be? For all I know, she will have to wear bloomers; but, assuming that she is allowed to dress like other female mortals, she will be expected to be peculiar and strong-minded and—and unattractive. She is more than likely to remain single, and her best years will be passed in listening to hum-drum recitations and collecting funds for new dormitories."

"Instead of leading a life of frivolous and elegant leisure, like the rest of you."

Mrs. Stagg tossed her head and answered with calm disdain:

"Did I not know that you were merely trying to excite me, Harold, I might take offense at the personal character of your remark. Well, I am frivolous, if you like; I do not lay any special claim to intellectuality, though I try to keep up with what people are talking about and to read the new books. But, as to your saying that Eleanor would have been obliged to lead a life of frivolous and elegant leisure, as you call it.

had she seen fit to behave like an ordinary Christian being and marry the man who was devoted to her, why, the idea is simply absurd. 'Elegant,' I grant if she had married Owen Page, but she could have been the very antipodes of 'frivolous' and 'idle,' had she seen fit, and no one would have thought anything about it. That's the provoking part of it; we are so much in need of clever people in society—I suppose that I must admit that Eleanor is really clever—and Owen Page was just the man to let his wife do whatever she wished. If she was bent on being literary, she could have her house the rallying-ground of all the authors and artists and musical people in the city. Instead, she prefers to be the spinster lady president of a mixed college out West."

"We are not sure yet that she has accepted the position," said Harold, as he snipped off the end of a cigar with the gilt cutter attached to his watch-chain, preparatory to going to the smoking-car.

"Why should she refuse it?"

"Merely because she is a woman, and it is never safe to prognosticate how any one of your sex will act under any given set of circumstances. She evidently wishes to have my views on the subject. Well, she shall have them. I shall advise her to accept without the slightest hesitation," said the broker, in his decisive fashion.

"She would certainly be crazy to turn back at this stage of the game," Emma assented. "She made her choice five years ago, and the only thing for her to do, it seems to me, is to live up to it now. We agree so far, at any rate."

Twenty-four hours later, the Staggs alighted from the train at Hoadley, the small town on the confines of which stood Clavering College, named after its founder and benefactor, one Thomas Clavering, who had established the institution as a memorial to his two deceased children, a son and a daughter. A twenty-minute drive in the buckboard they found in waiting, behind a swift pair of long-tailed horses,

brought them to an imposing gateway, blazoned with the college arms on one side and patriotic inscriptions on the other. As they drove up the long avenue flanked by tall pines, they could see on either hand a wide stretch of undulating greensward, variegated by knolls and clumps of trees in the full flush of autumn brilliancy, which the loquacious driver informed them was a part of the college domain. There were two hundred acres in all, he said.

"Whew! Land must be cheap," said Harold.

"And think what a place for flirtation," Emma answered. "I wonder we don't see the landscape dotted with sauntering couples."

After a quarter of a mile of avenue they came in sight of the buildings, four in number, arranged in the form of a large quadrangle, which were severally described by their guide as the College House, the dormitory for the men students, the dormitory for the lady students, and the gymnasium and theatre combined. All of them were elaborately and tastefully constructed

after the latest fashion of approved modern architecture, so that even Emma felt obliged to murmur her acquiescence in the laudatory expressions which were uttered by Harold.

"They're tasty and no mistake," said the driver, by way of setting the seal of his approval on their verdict. "You ought ter see the boat-house and the lake where the crews race. I tell you there's one crew of the lady students that can make the boys row for all they know how. Say," he added, reining in his horses, "maybe you'd like to drive round by the lake before we stop. Ten minutes 'll do it."

"Much obliged to you; no. Miss Baldwin is expecting us," said Harold.

"A fine-appearing lady—Miss Baldwin. I suppose you heered she be 'lected lady president? I ain't strong on women's rights myself, but they do say she's a smart one."

So saying, he drew up before the building which he had described as "College House."

Eleanor, who was on the lookout for them, ran down the steps to greet them.

"Welcome to Clavering, Uncle Harold and Aunt Emma."

"Well, Mistress Lady President, I bow before you," said Harold, after he had given her a smart kiss.

Eleanor laid her finger on her lips.

"S-h! No titles, please. I have not accepted yet."

"But you will, of course."

"Perhaps, but perhaps not. We will talk of that later," she added, with an air of mystery which seemed to embarrass her a little, as they went up the steps.

Emma, who had embraced her in her turn, was acknowledging to herself the fact that she had filled out amazingly in the two years since they had met, and that she was certainly a very fine-looking woman. She found herself in an airy, spacious hall, where the only objectionable feature was an execrable bust of the founder of

the institution, upon which her eye rested glassily as she followed her niece down a corridor which led to what Eleanor styled the visitors' room, a pleasant apartment in which a cheerful fire was burning. Here they were received by the senior professor of the college, an elderly lady, whose white hair was carefully twisted at either temple into a trio of fat ringlets, and who was still Miss Johnson. There was something, however, so gracious and affable in her bearing, she was so simple and free from affectation, that Emma, who at sight of her had put on a toplofty manner, let herself down inch by inch until she lost herself in genuine surprised admiration of her hostess's tact and gentility. As for Harold, he and Miss Johnson hit it off capitally at once, so much so that the moment he was out of hearing on the way to their rooms he exclaimed:

"She is a regular old trump, Eleanor. Have you any more like her?"

"She is certainly a very agreeable woman," Emma added, with a meditative air. "One can

hardly expect to find many more so attractive as she."

"But we think most of our professors very attractive," answered Eleanor, glancing at her aunt with a confident little smile.

"'*Ab uno disce omnes*,' as we used to say in the classics. 'Know one, know all.' Well that's more than we can say about society people, isn't it, Cherub? There we have to wade through a bushel of chaff in order to find an occasional pearl."

"I think, dear, that one can scarcely make an intelligent comparison at this time between society in New York and the faculty of a Western college. We shall be very comfortable here, I'm sure," Emma added, as she glanced around the parlor into which Eleanor had ushered them, with the statement that it was for their use, and that there was a bed-chamber opening out of it.

"Dinner will be ready in half an hour, and I will come shortly before that, so as to take you about a little beforehand. My room is close by."

"Well, Cherub," exclaimed Harold, as he attacked his valise after Eleanor had closed the door, "I expect that before we are ready to go home, you will be beseeching me to move out West, bag and baggage."

"Don't be absurd, dear. I wonder," she added, thoughtfully, a moment later, "why Eleanor is uncertain about accepting the presidency. Did you notice how confused she looked when you referred to the matter?"

"The poor child is naturally modest. She is not used to having honors thrust upon her."

"It wasn't mere diffidence. I tell you, Harold, she has something on her mind. There is some secret reason for her hesitation."

"Well, it won't be secret long, now that you are here, Cherub; that is, if there *is* any secret. I didn't notice anything, except that she blushed a little."

"I imagine that she intends to inform us—or at least you—of her own accord of the reasons, seeing that she asked you to come out here for

that express purpose, so that your innuendo is scarcely pertinent, to say nothing of its impertinence. I shall believe, however, until I am convinced to the contrary, that the cat in the meal is a man."

"What man?"

"*A* man, I said. I have not the remotest idea who he is. I am waiting for her to tell us that."

Harold laughed.

"There is no one like a woman to ferret out what is in another woman's mind. Well, dear, I hope you may be right, for then you will be able to say 'I told you so!'"

"On the contrary, I fervently hope that I am mistaken."

"Why, I thought that you were eager for her to be married."

"I wished her to marry Owen Page, five years ago, but I do not wish to see her marry Tom, Dick or Harry, and a Western Tom, Dick or Harry at that. Though, come to think of it, if

she will marry a Westerner and *stay* West, I do not so much care."

Harold laughed again, so that his fat sides shook, and said, as he adjusted the pearl pin that adorned his neck-tie:

"You women are fearfully and wonderfully made."

Eleanor returned a few minutes later and carried them on a tour of inspection before dinner. The building which they were in had two wings. In one of these were the reception-rooms and the dining-hall; in the other, the faculty chamber, the library and the apartments of the professors. The tutors and proctors had their apartments in the dormitories. There was an air of complete tranquility in the house at the moment, for the reason that the students had all gone to their rooms to make preparations for dinner, so that they had an excellent opportunity to see what there was to be seen, free from the distraction of human agencies. As they were emerging from the last recitation-room the clang

of a bell announced that it was meal-time, and immediately after there was a rush of steps and hum of voices, which caused Emma to prick up her ears with curiosity despite her preconceived intention to be shocked. In another instant a surging troop of youths and maidens was sweeping by in prattling but orderly concourse. Except that they were mixed, there was very little to distinguish them, either in their dress or bearing, from any other body of students, save that the sight of so many young women together was novel to both of the Staggs. Harold's eyes opened wide in admiration of this and that beauty, and he would fain have made his enthusiasm audible but for the repressing "S-h!" of his wife which greeted his first attempt at articulation.

Eleanor purposely detained her guests until the last of the procession had passed, and then escorted them into the large dining-room, on either side of the central aisle of which were rows of tables. This aisle was the dividing line

between the sexes. On the right of it were the young men, and on the left the young women. At the farther end of the room were two other tables, slightly raised above and at right angles with the rest, to one of which Eleanor conducted her uncle and her aunt. These were reserved for the chief officers of instruction.

The Staggs were given seats next to Miss Johnson, who presently rose to say a few words of grace. Before she spoke, one could have heard a pin drop in the large hall. The moment after she had finished, there was a perfect babel of voices, to the tune of which a file of young men and young women disappeared in the direction of the kitchen, from which they emerged, a moment later, with plates of soup.

"The students take turns in waiting upon each other," Miss Johnson explained to Emma. "Every week there is a fresh corps of waiters and waitresses."

"Is the cooking also done by them?" she asked, a little austerely.

"Oh, no. We draw the line at table service, except that all the students, men as well as women, make their own beds."

"I should like to ask if good looks are a requisite for admission, Miss Johnson," said Harold. "I should judge that they are, from the number of fine-looking young women I see—among the professors as well as the students," he added, as his glance ran along the tables where the instructors, of whom at least one-half were of the gentler sex, were seated. In their case there was no separation of the men from the women.

"We believe, too, that they are as meritorious as they are prepossessing," answered Miss Johnson.

"And not one of them, so far as I see, wears bloomers. My wife," he said, in a loud whisper intended for Emma's ears, "expected that they would all be homely and in bloomer costume."

"What rubbish, Harold!" Mrs. Stagg mur-

mured, but she could not help looking a little confused.

Miss Johnson attempted to relieve the situation by saying that he must surely be exaggerating, for the reason that Mrs. Stagg was at least aware of her niece's charms, which brought a guilty blush to Emma's cheeks. But Harold diverted attention from her by exclaiming :

"It does sound, though, a little like a menagerie."

"And the women are certainly the most noisy," said Miss Johnson. "There is a distinction you must try to obliterate, Miss Baldwin, my dear, when the reins are in your hands."

Eleanor smiled and let fall her eyes.

The dinner was plain, but good. At its conclusion, Miss Johnson invited the visitors to take their coffee in her apartment, and afterward Eleanor conducted them through the dormitories and over the gymnasium, and finally to her own quarters, which consisted of a snug little parlor with an adjoining bed-room. It was a veritable

student's den. Books and papers were in the ascendant, with a sufficient sprinkling, however, of feminine effects to produce an impression of coziness also. There were two easy-chairs, relieved by pretty tidies, a sofa, a tasteful rug and a round work-table of artistic design, which served as a foil to the somber study table in the center occupied by books, manuscripts and a student-lamp. The bay-window was supplied with a window-seat covered with a cheerful chintz. A bust of the young Napoleon looked down from the mantel-piece, on either side of which were etchings by artists of repute.

Eleanor lighted another tall lamp with a variegated shade, and poked the fire into renewed energy.

"Here you see me," she exclaimed, gayly, "in the midst of my household gods."

"And very well off you seem to be, too," answered Harold, as he settled himself in one of the easy-chairs, and looked around him.

For a few moments Eleanor absorbed their

attention with an inspection of her belongings, but presently, when Emma and she had followed Harold's example and seated themselves, she said after a pause:

"I am very glad that you were able to pay me a visit, Uncle Harold; because there is a matter I wish to speak to you about, especially."

CHAPTER XII.

A STRAIT 'TWIXT TWO.

As Eleanor finished, Emma rose demurely and said that she thought that she would go to her own room for awhile.

"No, Aunt Emma, I should like you to stay and hear what I have to say. Three heads are sometimes better than two."

"Certainly, dear, if you prefer."

Eleanor waited a moment, as if doubtful how to begin, then she said:

"You have both always been so very kind to me, so much like a father and mother, that I feel willing to come to you for counsel, in spite of the fact that it was not entirely with your sanction that I decided to become a teacher. I have come

to a pass now where I really do not know how to act, and where—the worst of it is—that I do not see very well how any one can help me much, except myself," she added, with a despondent little laugh. "Still, I have not felt willing to accept the position which has been offered me until I had considered the matter carefully. Do you think that it would be advisable for me to accept, Uncle Harold?"

Harold's brow had become contracted, as the result of his attempt to interpret this rather ambiguous address, and, as a consequence, there was a resultant sternness in his response to the direct question, which completed it.

"Accept? I should say that you would be very foolish not to accept. Of course," he added, in the same tone, "I don't know what reasons you may have for being doubtful in the matter, but they ought to be pretty good ones to induce you to decline such a position."

"I don't know that I have any reasons," said Eleanor, gently. Then as her eyes encoun-

tered Emma's fixed searchingly upon her, she lowered them, and began to toy with the embroidery of the sofa-cushion.

A man cannot very well manifest impatience so openly when another woman is beating about the bush, as when the offender is his wife, so that Harold felt constrained to limit his displeasure to a restless twist in his chair, and a still deeper frown. He detested indirect methods, and he was on the point of saying to his niece that she had better out with her mystery whatever it was, when she broke the silence with the query:

"Did you ever hear of a man named Professor Struthers, Uncle Harold?"

Emma shot a glance of triumph at her husband and folded her arms.

"Struthers? Struthers? The name seems familiar."

"Professor William Struthers. He is an electrical engineer."

"The inventor of the Struthers storage bat-

tery? Why, certainly; I am one of his stockholders. He has made a very valuable invention. Yes, I have met him a number of times."

"So have I," said Eleanor, demurely. "I met him first when I was staying with Uncle Phin. five years ago, and I saw him frequently when Uncle Phin. was so ill; he helped to nurse him."

She stopped and there was another awkward silence.

"Well, dear?" said Emma from an admixture of excess of curiosity, womanly sympathy and fear lest Harold might be goaded into overt impetuosity by further delay.

Eleanor gave a little start as if she had been pricked by a pin, then she answered with an attempt at directness:

"The long and short of it is, that Professor Struthers has asked me to marry him, and I—er—wished you to know this before I accepted—a—the presidency of Clavering."

"I see," said Harold, as she paused, though

the puzzled expression of his countenance belied his words.

"You think it wise for me to accept, do you not, uncle Harold?" she continued eagerly. "You approve of it—you consider it an honorable position?"

"I have already said so."

"I felt sure that you would think so. It has seemed so to me. There can be no doubt about it," she concluded, emphatically shaking her head. "Thank you very much, Uncle Harold."

"I am sure that I do not know exactly for what," he answered a moment later.

"For confirming my own impression as to what it was the wisest for me to do."

But it was not until Emma spoke that the look of mystification on Harold's face grew less.

"Eleanor means, my dear," said she, in a deliberate tone, "that she has had to decide between Professor Struthers on one hand and the presidency on the other, and she has decided in favor of the latter."

Eleanor sighed and nodded acquiescence.

"I ought to say, though, that he is willing to change his residence and live here if I will only marry him. But that would be asking too much of him. It would not be right."

"I should think that it would never do," said Emma, coldly.

"And, therefore," Eleanor continued, "I am so glad that you agree with me and think that I am doing what is wise, Uncle Harold. You mustn't mind my crying," she added, realizing that her voice had suddenly broken down and that there were tears in her eyes. "It is merely nervousness, isn't it, Aunt Emma?"

"Certainly, dear. And it seems to me that you are acting very wisely."

"And it seems to me that I have very little idea what this is all about," said Harold.

"No matter," pursued Emma, promptly. "We know, don't we, Eleanor?" she said, taking her hand in hers and stroking it softly. "And it is all decided, isn't it, dear?"

"Yes, it is all decided," was the girl's answer, accompanied with a fresh burst of tears, which made Harold look decidedly uncomfortable.

"Well, one thing is sure," he said, almost fiercely, "I give 'up attempting to understand women."

CHAPTER XIII.

"VARIUM ET MUTABILE SEMPER FEMINA EST."

Twenty-four hours later, Emma and her husband were in the train on the way to Chicago. Harold, though still by no means enlightened to his own satisfaction as to the exact meaning of the dialogue which had taken place in his niece's parlor, was, nevertheless, very well pleased at her determination to accept the presidency. She had smiled at his remark as to his inability to understand women, and immediately after had dried her eyes with the manner of one who has settled a matter for good and all, and wishes to dismiss it. Nevertheless, he had not been able to explain to himself how he or Emma had been of assistance to Eleanor in making up her mind, or why it had been necessary for them to visit

her. There was, obviously, some mystery which Emma appeared to understand, the solution of which was for some reason withheld from him. Moreover, his wife, contrary to expectation, had seemed eager to avoid further discussion of the matter when they were alone together; so much so that she had neglected to call his attention to the fact that she had prophesied that there was a man at the bottom of it. The only further reference to it by Eleanor had been a promise made by her on the way to the station, whither she accompanied them, to write them full particulars of the inauguration ceremonies, the date for which would be fixed as soon as her letter of acceptance of the office had been sent to the trustees.

Five minutes after the train was under way, however, Emma, who had been sitting lost in contemplation, sighed, and with a sympathizing shake of the head, said:

"Poor child! I am sorry for her."

As she spoke, she cast an interrogative glance

at Harold, who answered, somewhat doggedly, "What is the matter now, Cherub?"

"Nothing is the matter; but when a girl is in love with a man it is always hard to give him up. For once in her life Eleanor, however, seems to have acted with discretion."

"Do you mean that she was in love with that man she mentioned, Professor Struthers?"

"Why, certainly, dear."

"Why didn't she say so, then?"

"She did, as plainly as it was possible for her to do, considering that she was not going to marry him."

"Humph!"

"It would never have done," continued Emma, ruminantly. "My fear was that she might conclude to accept his offer to give up his position and live at Clavering. That would have been a smaller evil than if she had married him and gone to New York; but to throw him over altogether was by far the best thing she could have done."

"I supposed that she decided not to accept him because she did not love him," said Harold. "To tell the truth, though, I was pretty well in the dark all through."

"I saw that you were, dear, and I was rather thankful, for a word of the wrong sort from your lips might have spoiled everything."

"How do you mean?"

"If you had given her any encouragement I am afraid she would have married him."

"I thought you were anxious to have her married."

"So I was—to the right man. But this would never do."

"Why not? This Professor Struthers is a very decent fellow, and a very able one from all accounts. His invention is already very successful, and he is sure to be rich, and I understand that he has taken out patents for the introduction of electricity as a motive power in moving railroad trains. He is a rising man, I should say, and if Eleanor is in love with him, I think she

had better have married him, even if she were obliged to give up her presidency in order to do so."

"It is a little late now," said Emma, majestically. "You should have said so at the time."

"But I tell you I had no idea she was in love with him."

"That was not my fault."

"Pshaw! It's an outrage, Cherub. You oughtn't to have let her do it."

Emma coughed uneasily.

"I don't mean that she was desperately in love with him. Of course, if she had been she would have accepted him very likely, without asking us anything about it. What I mean is that she liked him just well enough, so that, other things being equal, she would have married him. But they weren't equal, and she knew it. He wanted her to give up her position."

"Of course he did. Any man would; and if he had given up his own in order to marry her he would have been a fool. Well, as I said at

the time, women are beyond me. Apparently, I am in the position of having advised her to accept the presidency at the cost of her affections. That is the logical outcome of your insinuation."

"Most women don't have any position which they have to give up," pursued Emma, who was dwelling on the earlier portion of his speech. "Well, yes, dear," she added, with a laugh, "I suppose if any one is to be held responsible for her not marrying him, you are. But I call it a blessed escape. I have seen his picture."

"Well, he is good-looking enough, so far as I remember."

"Oh, yes. He is, in fact, rather handsome. But beauty is not everything."

"Add beauty to intelligence, good character, and the probability of large means, and you get a pretty fair aggregate."

Emma pursed her lips disdainfully.

"As I said before, if she were to marry him, and they were to live out here, it might not have

been such a very bad idea if Eleanor had been seriously bent on it; but if she had come to live in New York, he would have been a white elephant on our hands. He knows nobody; in fact, they neither of them know anybody now. What would they have done?"

"Died from sheer lack of companionship in a city of over a million inhabitants. Cherub, you are superb!"

"Laugh if you like, Harold. I am right. She is very much better off as she is. People have got used to thinking of her as a blue stocking and it will be rather a feather in her cap to be known as president of a college, even if she is described in the newspapers as 'Lady President.' But to marry a man who is wrapped up in batteries, and whom no one ever heard of before he invented this machine, or whatever it is, would be neither one thing or another. Unless I were to take them in hand and push them hard, they would have no chance of getting on; and I doubt very much if everything I could do would

be sufficient, though it is possible that the great interest which there is in electricity at the moment might save them from falling flat. But I am thankful that I have not got to try."

Harold was silent for some moments.

"I am not sure, Cherub," he said, "that I shall not write Eleanor a letter, telling her that I did not understand the real facts."

"What facts will you tell her you did not understand?"

"That she loves that man, of course."

"She will scarcely thank you for that, my dear. Girls do not care to have it said to them that they are in love with men whom they have refused."

"But you said she admitted it."

"What I said was that any one could have told she was in love with him. She never said so in words, of course."

Harold squirmed in his chair disgustedly, and spreading out with a jerk the newspaper which he had just bought, he said:

"If people expect others to give them good advice, they should speak out plainly, instead of beating about the bush. I believe in calling a spade a spade."

Thereupon he relapsed into dignified silence behind the expanse of newspaper, which Emma did not see fit to interrupt until the train stopped for refreshments, an hour or so later.

The Staggs, after visiting Chicago, went to several other cities, so that it was over a fortnight from the date of their departure from Clavering before they reached home. As Emma ran her eye over the packet of letters awaiting them on the hall-table, she exclaimed:

"Here's one from Eleanor! I suppose the inauguration must have taken place."

Harold, who was removing his overcoat, heard her gasp a moment after, and looking up, perceived that her eyes were greedily devouring the contents of an open letter with an expression of horror.

"What is it?" he asked.

"All I can say is she is a perfect fool!"

"Who is?"

"Your precious niece, Eleanor Baldwin."

"What has she done now?" he said, as he approached his wife and looked over her shoulder. "I say, who authorized you to open my letter?"

"Don't be foolish, Harold. Take your old letter. I might have known I couldn't trust her. Why didn't I stay until the ceremony was over?"

"The ceremony? Why, is Eleanor married?" he asked, as he received the letter from her hand.

"The inauguration ceremony, goose."

Harold went into the library, and seating himself near the window to catch the waning afternoon light, read as follows:

"DEAR UNCLE HAROLD:—You will think me a regular Reuben, I dare say. 'Unstable as water thou shalt not excel.' Well, I have no

wish to excel after this in anything but the homely duties that belong to a purely domestic life. I have told him that I would marry him, Uncle Harold. Professor Struthers I mean. I thought, when you were here, that I was settled in my mind that it was best to give him up; but after you and Aunt Emma were gone I felt so miserable that I went up to my room and had a good cry, and then I knew that I had been trying to deceive myself. There is no use in disguising it, dear Uncle Harold. I love William Struthers and he loves me; and I have written to tell him that I will marry him as soon as he wishes. One of us must give up, and I cannot let him, can I?"

At this point in the letter Harold paused and gave vent to an explosive: "Hooray! Of course she can't let him!" Whereupon he glanced triumphantly at Emma, who, seated, and rocking herself nervously in a little gilt rocking-chair, was watching him read. The letter continued:

"I could not bear to have him give up the position which he holds in order to gratify my ambition, so the only way is for me to give up everything for his sake. I did not believe that I could ever do it for any man, but love is a wonderful persuader, dear Uncle Harold.

"I do hope that you and dear Aunt Emma will not feel very badly. I am sure that you will love my husband when you know him, and I am confident that, when you think the matter over, you will agree that, great as was the honor I am renouncing, true love ought not to be gainsaid for any honor in the world."

Again Harold paused and ejaculated:

"Hooray! That girl is a trump!"

"Have you finished?" Emma asked, icily.

"Not quite, Cherub. Listen to the last page."

"I have written to the trustees to tell them why I have decided to decline the presidency of the college; and it seems best to me—to William also—that the wedding should take place as soon

as possible. I have decided, too, that I should like to be married here, from the college where the last five years of my life have been passed. In asking your permission for this, I am not unmindful that you will be sure to wish to have me married from your own house; and such would have been my wish, too, except that by being married here I can give pleasure to a large number of the students who are dear to me, and who could not possibly come to New York. Moreover, if I were married from your house, a simple wedding would be almost out of the question, and neither William nor I would like a fashionable ceremony. But, if you would prefer it otherwise, we shall give up our own preferences. And now, dear Uncle Harold, let me thank you from the bottom of my heart, and thank Aunt Emma, too, for all the love and kindness you have lavished on me—love and kindness greater than which you could not have shown to any child. Indeed, I feel myself to be your

child, and it is with the assurance that you feel similarly toward me that I sign myself

Your loving

ELEANOR."

Harold folded up the letter with a beaming expression, but tears in his voice restrained him from speaking for a few moments; then he said, happily:

"What do you think of that?"

"I am trying not to think of it," Emma replied, in a sepulchral tone. "I suppose you will aid and abet her, as usual?"

"To the extent of telegraphing her my congratulations and high approval of everything she has decided upon, if that is aiding and abetting," he answered, seating himself at his desk and searching for a blank.

"Including the Western ceremony?"

"That is a matter for her own discretion. The reason she gives for preferring it seems to me very sensible."

"She will probably be married before a justice of the peace," groaned Emma.

"Nonsense. What if she is?"

"No proper ceremony; no suitable dress; no invitations; no wedding-cake, I dare say," she murmured, as she rocked herself to and fro.

"You can send her a wedding-cake, you know," hazarded Harold.

"Some women would be thankful to be free from the bother of it all," she continued, without regard to his remark; "but there is a right way and a wrong way of doing everything. And," she added, with a dreary sigh, "if there *is* a wrong way, Eleanor always chooses it. Of course, she can do as she sees fit, and, of course, when she comes to New York, I shall have to do what I can for her, Harold, because she is your niece; but it is perfectly certain that she and I are fated never to agree on any possible subject—never—never——never!"

"Poor Cherub!" her husband answered, with genuine commiseration, looking up from the tele-

gram he was composing, for he was touched by the melancholy in her voice. "And yet I know," he continued, "that as soon as she comes here, there is nothing you will not do to make her comfortable and happy.

"I suppose I shall be just fool enough," she answered, with mournful emphasis.

For some minutes she rocked herself with folded arms, while Harold wrote and re-wrote his telegram.

"Harold," she said, finally.

"Well, dear?"

"I have been thinking what we shall give them for a wedding-present. They will probably get very little silver, and I think we had better give them spoons and forks. It may take some time to have them marked properly, so the sooner I order them, the better."

"Just the thing, I should say," he replied, as he rose from the table, and he stooped to kiss her, exclaiming with proud fondness: "There

is no one eqnal to you, Cherub, in the whole world."

Emma received his embrace with pleased complacency. Then she looked up at him and said, before reading the telegram he had dropped in her lap:

"Do you know, Harold, I sometimes think that if I had not married you, you might have done something very foolish."

THE END.

JUN 25 1915

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